

MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM

Stories Not Told Before

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Dear Mr. Editor,

Most of the Islamists respond to the Free Thinkers' criticism of Islam by claiming that Muhammad was a God's prophet and as such whatever he did and said in his lifetime could not be doubted or questioned by any human being. Instead of responding to each and every Islamists, I worked on Muhammad's life and tried to prove the fact that he was simply a manipulative, conniving and dictatorial ruler; he not only established the religion of Islam but also ruled the Arabian Peninsula with an iron fist for so long as he lived.

- Muhammad Asghar

Part - 1

Long time ago, a tiny spot in the midst of the Arabian Peninsula became a focal point for all the Pagan Bedouins of the desert for the reason that it had on its bosom the House of God, also known as the *Kaba*, along with a well the pagans called *Zamzam*, which helped them quench their killing thirst.

The pagans were a deeply religious people. They held the view that there was a god to cover each aspect of their lives. Consequently, they believed that there was a god who gave them life. They also believed that the same god gave them sustenance and protected them from all hazards of their lives. They further believed that there were other gods who rained water from the sky and made them successful in their battles.

There was a tribe, called *Quraish* among the pagans, which was intelligent and enterprising. Its members preferred sedentary life to a nomadic life.

Capitalizing on other Bedouin tribes' religious devotions as well as their lack of preference to a sedentary life, the members of the *Quraish* tribe installed themselves in *Mecca*, around the House of God and the well of *Zum-Zum*, with the aim to cater to the religious needs of their nomadic and sedentary brethren. They had the inside and outside of the House of God staked with three hundred and sixty idols, which all of the pagans venerated and worshipped.

Over a period of time, the spot first came to be known as *Bakka* (3:96) and then *Mecca*. The *Quraish* tribe was its virtual occupant due to the fact that some of its powerful members perpetually controlled the supervision, and the religious rituals, of the House of God.

The members of the Quraish tribe consisted of three groups. One was the priestly group, which controlled the House of God, and sustained itself on the income that the House generated for it from the pilgrims. The second group consisted of a small number of the Quraish people who engaged themselves in trade. The third group was large, and it consisted of the people who sustained themselves by providing water and other services to the pilgrims. This occupation of theirs did not guarantee them a regular income; when they had a large number of pilgrims, they earned a good living, but when the number of the pilgrims declined, so did their income. Those people can be compared with our modern-day day laborers; they get paid only when they are employed for active service.

Over 1,400 years ago, there lived in Mecca a man by the name of **Abdullah**. He belonged to the third group of the Quraish people. His wife's name was **Amina**. Because he did not have a consistent income, his household often suffered from deprivations. Many a time, the couple had to go to bed without food. Persistent poverty took its toll; the couple frequently fought and argued on their financial condition as well as on what was likely to happen to them in future.

Recognizing the fact that she and her husband did not have the means to feed another mouth, Amina always forced her man to ejaculate his semen outside her vagina. This practice helped her to avoid pregnancy for sometime, but one night Abdullah failed to control himself, and she ended up being a pregnant woman.

Amina was angry. She tried her best to destroy the pregnancy, but failed.

Unable to do anything else with her conception, she resigned to her fate and decided to carry her pregnancy to its full term. Abdullah, her husband, felt for her discomforts and sought to help by providing her with the services of a slave-girl, named **Barakat**.

But as misfortune would have it, Amina's husband died when she was about six months into her pregnancy. This tragedy increased her hatred towards the child she was carrying in her belly. She considered it to be the harbinger of a bad luck. She feared that many more mishaps would befall her after she delivered the jinxed baby.

At the time of his death, Abdullah is believed to have owned five camels, a few sheep and a female slave of Ethiopian origin, named Barakat.

Not being able to do anything else to alleviate her fear, she carried the fetus until it was ready to take birth as a baby-boy. When the time finally arrived, she delivered the baby without a hitch.

Amina called the baby-boy **Kothan**, but his grandfather changed it to **Muhammad** at a later date. (See R. V. C. Bodley's *The Messenger*, p 6)

Contrary to the general belief, Muhammad is not a Muslim name; rather, it is an Arabian pagan name that was in use even before the birth of Islam's founder.

Genealogically, it is claimed that Muhammad was a descendent of **Ismail**, who, as the Bible implies, was an illegitimate son of **Abraham**, born of **Hagar**, an Egyptian handmaid of his wedded wife, **Sarah** (Genesis, 16:1-15). It was this son, the majority of Muslims believe, whom Abraham attempted to sacrifice upon God's command in a dream, and

who, as a consequence, earned the heavenly title of *Zabi-Ullah* i.e. 'the one to be sacrificed in the name of God' - not his legitimate son **Isaac**, as claimed by the Book of Genesis.

The actual date of Muhammad's birth is not known, nor can it be ascertained now. The scholarly hypothesis on this issue is at some variance. Philip K. Hitti says that he was born in or around 571 AD (Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 111). Abdullah Yusuf Ali **maintains**, "The year usually given for the Prophet's birth is 570 A.D, though the date must be taken as only approximate, being the middle figure between 569 and 571, the extreme possible limits." (*The Holy Quran*, V. 2, p. 1071)

The discrepancy in the year of Muhammad's birth notwithstanding, **some Muslims categorically maintain that he was born in the early hours of Monday, the 29th day of August, 570 AD** - an occasion that they observe each year with great fanfare. (See Ghulam Mustafa, *Vishva Nabi*, p. 40) Contrary to this, and as is the case with Jesus Christ, the year of Muhammad's birth cannot, in fact, be established with reliable historical evidence. The celebrations that are held now to celebrate Muhammad's birth, therefore, have no Islamic basis and these are mere traditions only.

At the time of Muhammad's birth, the Arabs lived in a state of moral decadence. Though the institution of marriage existed among the Arabs for its namesake, they pursued extramarital sex at whim. On the subject of the Arabs' fornication, Maxime Rodinson quotes Rabbi Wathan:

"Nowhere in the world was there such a propensity towards fornication as among the Arabs, just as nowhere was there any power like that of Persia, or wealth like that of Rome, or magic like that of Egypt. If all the sexual licenses in the world were divided

into ten parts, nine of these would be distributed among the Arabs and the tenth would be enough for all the other races". (Muhammad, p. 54, as translated by Anne Carter)

R. V. C Bodley tacitly concurred with Wathan, saying:

"There was Amr Ibn al Aas, the son of a beautiful Meccan prostitute. All the better Meccans were her friends, so that anyone, from Abu Sofian down, might have been Amr's father. As far as anyone could be sure, he might have called himself Amr Ibn Abu Lahab, or Ibn al Abbas or Ibn anyone else among the Koreishite upper ten. According to Meccan standards of that time, it did not matter who had sired him" (In his book, The Messenger, p. 73).

According to historians, Muhammad was born during this period of time, and in one of the ten upper class Quraish families of Mecca. To these people, it did not matter who had fathered whom. All children born under this condition must have always faced the question over the legitimacy of their mothers' conceptions!

In spite of becoming the mother of a son, whom her society greatly valued, Amina continued to maintain her hatred towards the newborn boy. In order to take her vengeance out, she refused to suckle him, even when he was hungry.

Seeing the child's suffering and to help him survive, **Thuwaibah**, a slave-girl of the child's uncle Abu Lahab, took upon herself the responsibility to breastfeed him for a few days (see Adil Salahi's *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, p. 23) until someone else was found to take him into her permanent custody.

In the period Muhammad was born, poor Bedouins from the desert used to flock, from time to time, to Mecca to collect alms from those few who could afford to give it to them. Following the tradition, **Haleema**, a poor Saadite shepherd

woman, came and knocked at Amina's door. Being herself a poor widowed woman, Amina had nothing to offer Haleema; instead, she wished to unload her own burden by putting her newborn son into her lap.

Haleema was dumbfounded, for, in her judgment, no mother would ever dispose of her baby in the manner Amina wanted hers disposed. Knowing well her own situation, Haleema, at first, refused to accept the custody of the child, but when she considered the fact that she would have, in due course of time, two more hands to help her family out in its dire circumstances, she took the baby and left for her home.

Haleema's tribe lived in one of the pastoral valleys of Northern Arabia. Though they were poor, they always maintained their industrious and bold characters. Unlike the people of the Quraish tribe, the people of the Saadite tribe excelled in the use of sword and lances. Their dexterous use of swords and lances always earned them triumphs in the struggles that they had to face almost regularly, and perpetually, in order to survive in the harsh conditions and environments of their surroundings.

The people of the Saadite tribe were also renowned for speaking the most refined Arabic in all of Arabia. The similarity of the Quran's language with that of the Saaditic Arabic is the indication that the writer of the Quran must have been one of the Saadites, or that he must have lived among them during his formative years.

The entire population of the Arabian Peninsula believed in the existence of angels. They also believed that angels pay visits to people who were destined to receive special favors from Allah. This deity lived in and around the Ka'aba along with other 359 gods. Because the Arabs believed in the angels'

closeness to Allah, many of them took up their worship with the hope that once pleased, the angels would have no difficulty in convincing Allah to grant them relief from their endless sufferings.

Haleema's son, **Masroud**, was almost of Muhammad's age. She began rearing up both the infants in her right earnest. She suckled both of them and cared for them equally. She looked forward to the day when those two infants would grow up and provide her with the help she always needed to make her life somewhat pleasant.

In the interlude she rarely enjoyed, Haleema, being a loving and caring mother, often used to mull over the future of Masroud, her own son. She was the product of the Bedouin life; she herself had been living such a life. Her long experience convinced her that no matter how industrious and brave her son was, the bareness of the desert and the conditions that obtained in it, would never afford him an opportunity to live a life that could even distantly be compared with the one that some people of Mecca lived. She, therefore, wanted her son to go to Mecca to live there a comfortable life.

But how was she going to send her son to Mecca? She consistently asked herself.

Haleema thought and thought. Lost in it, she spent many, many nights without sleep. Even during the day, her mind remained occupied with her only thought: how to induct Masroud, with a secured base, into the Meccan life.

Her constant and persistent exploration of possibilities eventually paid the dividend. It dawned on her that she could achieve her ambition easily if she arranged to return Muhammad to his mother in Mecca with an undetectable

switch. The switching plan required Haleema simply to have Muhammad substituted by Masroud and plant him in Amina's house where, she knew for sure, there was none who could ever suspect or question his identity.

Pleased with her plan, Haleema began working on its implementation. First of all, she needed to call Muhammad Masroud, and Masroud Muhammad. At the beginning, the infants appeared a little confused, but after a short period of time, they got used to the change. And this change proved hugely instrumental in turning around the destinies of two innocent infants; one of them was going to change, undeservedly, the face of the earth; the other was going to live, undeservedly for him, too, the life of an anonymous Bedouin.

The second step of the plan required Haleema to create a situation that would facilitate her son's plantation in Amina's house. This step required her to conceive a scenario that would not only fit in the pagans' age-old belief, it would also soften Amina's attitude towards her son whom she despised from the core of her heart. And what could be a better scenario than the following, which she made use of in order to convince Amina that her son was really a prodigious child.

No sooner had Muhammad stepped into the fifth year of his life, Haleema began telling everyone she came across about the prodigious nature of her adopted son. She took special pleasure in narrating the child's encounter with two angels whom, she claimed, her own son Masroud, had seen with his own eyes, surrounding Muhammad in a broad daylight.

Pressed for details, she used to tell her listeners that one day Masroud and Muhammad were playing in field. While

they were engrossed in their play, from nowhere, two angels appeared before Muhammad. They laid him gently on the ground, and Gabriel, one of the two angels, opened up the boy's heart. He cleansed it from impurity; wrung from it those black and bitter drops of the sin that we inherited from our forefather Adam, and which lurk in the hearts of the best of his descendents, inciting them to the commission of sin. When infant Muhammad had been thoroughly purified, Gabriel filled his heart with faith and knowledge and prophetic light, and then he replaced it in his bosom.

During this angelic visitation, Haleema told her listeners, the angels also impressed between Muhammad's shoulders the seal of prophecy. To prove her claim, she used to make Muhammad bare his body so that those people who doubted her sanity could see with their own eyes the mark that existed between his shoulders.

Haleema had to resort to this cunning tactic in order to hide a serious problem: The child that was born to Amina bore no mark at the back of his body, whereas Masroud had a distinctive birth mark between his shoulders. Now, if Haleema had not invented the story of the angels who, she had to claim, impressed Muhammad's body with "the seal of prophecy," her entire scheme would have been jeopardized, and her desire to plant her son in Amina's house frustrated.

The ground thus prepared for his return to his mother, Haleema carried Muhammad to Mecca and sought to deposit him on Amina's lap. Seeing her reluctance, Haleema narrated to her all that had happened to Muhammad, and also the affixation of the seal of prophecy by the angels on his back. Considerably mellowed down by Haleema's account of the child's supernatural expositions, Amina took back her son.

Haleema returned to her home in the desert, with the satisfaction that she succeeded in placing her son in a Meccan home where he would grow into a man and then find for himself a place to lead a life filled with relative abundance and peace.

Muhammad remained with Amina until his sixth year, although he often missed Haleema, his biological mother. He played with the local children, joined them in their merrymaking games, watched pilgrims praying at the temple of Ka'aba and welcomed and said goodbyes to the caravans that halted at the city before departing for their trading destinations. All the activities of the city fascinated him; for he found them to be quite different from the ones he saw and grew up with in the land of his birth.

Despite the antagonism that Amina had harbored against him following his birth, she treated him fairly well after his return from the desert. She fed him to the best of her ability, clothed him to the extent it was necessary and took care of his well being as well. She also took him around in the city and introduced him to his near as well as distant relatives.

After a few months of his return to Mecca, Amina took Muhammad to Medina and introduced him to her maternal relatives there. On her journey homeward, she died and was buried at **Abwa**, a village that lied between Medina and Mecca. Barakat, the slave-girl, now acted as a mother of the orphan child and delivered him to his grandfather **Abd al Muttalib**, in whose household he was destined to spend three years of his life.

Part - 2

Abd al Muttalib was the guardian of the temple of Ka'aba and from it he had a good income. But because his family

consisted of a large number of people, he often found it difficult to meet all of their needs. As a result, tension prevailed, most of the time, among his family members, even though they always put up a smiling face while outside their home.

Muhammad's inclusion in the family did not help the situation; rather, it brought about an additional load. All members of the family wanted him gone but as he was under his grandfather's protection, none dared ask him to leave. It did not mean that they had to develop a love for the child; what actually happened was exactly its opposite: They began to hate him and missed no opportunity that came to them to harass him. They might not have inflicted bodily injuries on him, but they almost certainly harmed him, beyond repairs, emotionally and psychologically.

When he suffered at the hands of his grandfather's family members, none of its female members ever came forward either to rescue him from their harassment or to console him afterwards. This attitude of theirs brought to his mind his mother's memory. He longed to be with her, wanted to be loved and hugged by her, but he could have none of them for the reason that she had abandoned him in the midst of those strange people. He started developing a hatred of his own towards his mother!

About three years after Muhammad had joined his family, Abd al Motalib found his end approaching. He, therefore, handed him over to his eldest son, **Abu Taleb**, in whose household he lived for several years.

THE CITY OF MECCA

The little town of Mecca, situated near the Red Sea coast of Arabia, had acquired great importance by the sixth century

for two different reasons: It became an important center of idol worshipping, to which many of the nomadic tribes of Arabia made pilgrimages on a regular basis. In addition to its religious prestige, however, Mecca also became an active center for commerce, from where caravans departed to various destinations on their trading missions.

Mecca was then a tiny township and most of its inhabitants belonged to the Quraish tribe, whose number could not have exceeded a couple of thousand. It was, and it still remains, an arid and inhospitable land incapable of producing anything to support its inhabitants' lives. Its pathways were dusty, with no civic facility worth its name existing therein. Its inhabitants knew nothing about personal health or hygiene.

Dwelling in tiny roofless homes built of clay, they survived in extreme poverty, which forced many of them to use goat and sheep skin to cover their bodies. No school of any kind existed in Mecca. In contrast to the Meccans, the Jews of Madina are believed to have run their own schools in which they instructed their children, primarily in the matters of their religious disciplines.

Because the Arabs could hardly ignite fire, both for cooking and illumination, they ate dates, locusts and lizards, and depended on camel's milk as a substitute for water. However, the Quran says that Allah had provided them with some kind of "green trees" (36:80) from which they obtained fire to meet their needs. During nights, the Arabs stayed inside their tents and homes, fearing mischief from capricious Jinns, which they believed, attacked mankind in darkness at solitary places.

Having nothing worthwhile to do either during the day or night, most of the people spent their time gossiping, drinking, gambling or narrating the fables that came down to them through generation after generation. Their other main pastime was an inordinate obsession with sex, both hetero-and homosexual, for they were reputed to have been endowed with great sexual virility. Muhammad possessed so much of virility, it is said, that he was able to satisfy all of his wives, numbering nine, during a single night.

The Arabs also practiced pederasty, an act they considered to be a normal part of their sexual conduct. Their womenfolk also led a highly licentious life, engaging themselves in sexual acts with any men they felt attracted to. Men recognized this conduct as being normal on the part of their women.

On the death of Abd al Motalib, his son, Abu Talib succeeded to the guardianship of Ka'aba, assuming the religious functions performed by all of his predecessors. The priestly office held by him required his sacerdotal household to observe rigidly all the rites and ceremonies of the sacred House of Allah. This afforded young Muhammad the opportunity to observe them closely and to record them in his mind, enabling him later to incorporate most of them, sans the idol worshipping, in his own religion.

PAGAN RITES

The rites and ceremonies practiced by the pagan Arabs before the advent of Islam consisted of, among others, the following:

- The pagans observed three principal fasts within the year; one of seven, one of nine, and one of thirty days. During their fasts, they ate and drank, but refrained from conversations.

- They prayed three times each day; about sunrise, at noon, and about sunset, turning their faces in the direction of Ka'aba (Washington Irving, *Mahomet and His Successors*, p. 31).

- They performed a yearly pilgrimage or *hajj*, which required them to circumambulate the Ka'aba seven times, to run between the two hills called Safa and Marwa, on each of which was installed a male and a female idol, to sacrifice animals in the name of the deities, and then to shave the heads of all male pilgrims. Female pilgrims satisfied the later commandment simply by having a few locks of their hair cut off.

ALLAH

One of the three hundred and sixty idols the pagans worshipped was called *Allah*, having all the essential characteristics of a man. He was one of their principal deities. They believed that this Allah gave them life and sustained them with his mercy and kindness. This deity was known as *Al-Rahman-an* (the merciful) and *Al-Rahim* (the compassionate) to the people of Northern and Southern Arabia.

The inscription (542-3) of Abrahah dealing with the break of the Marib Dam bears testimony to this historical fact. The inscription begins with the following words: "*In the power and grace and mercy of the Merciful (Rahman-an) and His messiah and of the Holy Spirit.*" The name *Al-Rahman-an* is especially significant because *al-Rahman* became later a prominent attribute of Allah, and one of His ninety-nine names in the Quran. Sura [chapter] nineteen of the Quran is dominated by the word *al-Rahman*. Though used in the inscription for the Christian God, the word is evidently borrowed from the name of one of the older South Arabian deities.

In truth, Muhammad, at the beginning of his career as a prophet, had required his followers to worship this same statuary Allah. He changed this commandment later to suite his concept of a God who, he believed, had no form or shape, thus separating his concept from that of the pagans and other polytheists of his time.

Apart from the stated rites, the pagans had many other religious traditions, some of which they acquired in early times from the Jews. They are also said to have nurtured their devotional feelings with the books of Psalms, as well as with a book filled with moral discourses, supposedly written by Seth who, according to the biblical stories, was one of Adam's many sons. Adam was the first human being whom God created by using his own hands out of mud which he made by mixing dust with water.

Muhammad's transfer to his uncle's household did not bring him any relief from what he suffered in his grandfather's house. Abu Taleb was not rich, either, but he, too, had a large family. Even though he, in addition to his sacerdotal duties of the Ka'aba, had taken to trading to supplement his income, he did not earn enough to provide for all the needs of his family members. Scarcity was a rule, rather than an exception for his family. As the family often passed their days in hardship, Muhammad's addition to the family became a burden not only for its head but also for its members. Consequently, they made him feel unwelcome in their midst, and used, in his presence, languages and gestures which were good enough to act as salt for the wounds he had already acquired from his grandfather's house.

Abu Taleb, on his part, was aware of the situation that his nephew had to endure in his house. He wanted to help, but

he, too, was handicapped; had he been able to meet the needs of his immediate family members, he could have justified Muhammad's presence in his house, but that was not the case and, consequently, he could do nothing for him but to play the role of a spectator. When he could live no more with his nephew's agonizing conditions, he found him a job of a shepherd.

His job required him to take his employers' camels into the plains for grazing. He thus had to spend, all by himself, the major portion of his days in the grim desert outside of Mecca. Letting the camels roam about in search of a thorn or a blade of grass among the pile of stones, we can visualize how a young, sensitive and intelligent boy of the age of Muhammad must have spent his time.

It is a rule of nature that misfortune and sufferings create bitterness in a person and these make him conscious of his situation, especially when he finds himself with nothing to distract him from his thoughts. Such a person grieves over his misfortune and tries to find out its causes. While doing so, he develops a strange internal feeling which can be described only by a person who has undergone such an experience in his or her own life.

Since the above observation amply applied to young Muhammad, we may safely conjecture that in the midst of his frustrating loneliness, he must have asked himself why he had come into the world as a fatherless orphan, and why he had to work as a shepherd at such a lonely place at such a young age, while other children of his age were spending their time in the company of their loving parents. He must also have asked himself why his mother had to leave him at the mercy of the people he hardly knew, and why their

treatment of him was different from that of their own children.

Despite the fact that he brought in some income to his uncle's family, they continued to treat him in the manner of the past. The continuity of their past behavior hurt him deeply, its resultant pains being the major cause for deepening his hatred towards his mother. He believed that if he had been living with her, nobody would have subjected him to the degrading insults which he suffered from at his grandfather's house, and which continued to be heaped upon on him at his uncle's house. He held his mother responsible for all of his sufferings.

His ego, sensitivity and feelings greatly hurt, Muhammad stopped playing with other children in his spare time. Instead, he felt more at home when conversing with other people who came to Mecca on pilgrimage or on trade. He enjoyed their conversations on religious matters. He also derived immense pleasure from their story-telling sessions. Very often, he prompted them into narrating the tantalizing and fascinating Arabian tales of the past. Most of the tales and fables he heard from them acted like balm for his wounds. When he got an opportunity, he narrated them eloquently to his listeners, who, in their own turn, made them an important and integral part of the Quran!

When he had no story-telling session to attend, he took immense pleasure in watching the arrival and departure of the caravans, which traded in Syria and Yemen, and thronged at Mecca before their dispersal. The thought of being in foreign lands filled young Muhammad's mind with excitement and carried his imagination to things he himself hoped one day to see in those distant countries.

Once, Muhammad saw Abu Taleb mount his camel to depart with a caravan bound for Syria. Unable to suppress his ardent desire, he begged his uncle to take him along on his journey. Abu Taleb could not deny his forceful request and gave him permission to accompany the caravan.

The route to Syria, in those days, lay through regions fertile in fables and traditions, which it was the delight of the traveling Arabs to recount during the evening respites of their caravans. The vastness and solitude of the desert in which the wandering Arabs passed so much of their lives was the fertile ground that also gave birth to numerous superstitious fancies. Accordingly, they had the deserts peopled with good and evil Jinns, and clothed them with tales of enchantment, mingled with wonderful but dubious events, which, they believed, had taken place in the distant past.

While traveling, the youthful Muhammad doubtless imbibed many of those superstitions of the desert. Remaining ingrained in his retentive memory, they later played a powerful role over his thoughts and imagination.

We may note here two ancient traditions out of many of the Arabian legends, which Muhammad must have heard at this time, and which we find recounted by him afterwards in the Quran. One of these related to the mountainous district called Hadjar.

As caravans crossed the silent and deserted valleys, caravanners gazed at the caves at the sides of the mountains. These caves were said to have been once inhabited by the Bani Thamud or the Children of Thamud. These people, Arabs believed, belonged to one of the lost tribes of Arabia.

Bani Thamud were a proud and gigantic race, existing at the time of patriarch Abraham. When they lapsed into

idolatry, God sent them a prophet from among themselves whose name was Saleh. His task was to restore them to His righteous path. People refused to listen to him unless he proved the divinity of his mission through a miracle. Saleh prayed, and God caused a rock to open up from which came out a gigantic she-camel, producing a foal and abundant milk soon after.

Some of the Thamudites were convinced by the sight of the miracle and gave up idolatry. The greater majority of them remained unimpressed and continued in their disbelief.

Disappointed, Saleh left the camel among the people as a sign from God, but warned them that a catastrophe would befall should they do her any harm. For a time, the camel was left to feed quietly in their pastures, but when she drank from a brook or a well, she never raised her head until she had drained the last drop of water.

In return, it was believed, she produced milk to supply the whole tribe. As she, however, frightened other camels out of pastures by her huge size, she became an object of offense to the Thamudites, who, to get rid of the beast, hamstrung and then slew her.

God retaliated for the killing of the she-camel. He caused a fearful cry, accompanied by great claps of thunder, to descend upon the Thamudites people at night from heaven; in the morning all the offenders were found dead, lying prostrated on their faces. Thus for avenging the death of a she-camel, God obliterated a whole race from the face of the earth. The land of the Thamudites still remains barren, caused by a constant curse from heaven.

This story had a powerful impact on Muhammad's mind, who, in later years, refused to let his people encamp in the

neighborhood, hurrying them away from this accursed region.

Another tradition gathered by Muhammad during one of his journeys related to the city of Eyla, situated near the Red Sea. This place, he was told, had been inhabited in ancient times by a tribe of the Jews. Like the Thamudites, they had lapsed into idolatry. Also, because the tribe had profaned the Sabbath by fishing on that sacred day, God transformed their old men into swine, and the young ones into monkeys.

What had happened to their womenfolk was not told, so Muhammad necessarily remained vague while narrating this story in the Quran.

The aforesaid traditions, among others, are found eloquently described in the Quran, thus indicating the extent of the bias to which Muhammad's youthful mind had been subjected during his journeys.

Muslim writers have eulogized many wonderful circumstances which are stated to have attended Muhammad throughout all the journeys of his life. He was, they assert, hovered over by unseen angels with their wings to protect him from the burning sands of the desert and the scorching rays of the sun.

On another occasion, he was protected by a cloud, which hung over his head during the noontime heat. On yet another occasion, a withered tree suddenly put forth its leaves and blossomed in order to provide shade to the distressed Muhammad.

All those miracles did not rest on the evidence of an eyewitness; rather these were Muhammad's own statements, or were invented, after his death, by his zealot followers,

which Muslims are required to believe without ever asking any questions.

During his journeys, Muhammad is said to have met a number of Christian hermits. Monk **Bahira** was prominent among them. On conversing with Muhammad, Bahira was struck by the precocity of his intellect and became entranced by his eager desire for varied information. His inquisitiveness centered, principally, on matters of religion. The two were believed to have held frequent conversations on the subject, in course of which the discourse of the monk was mainly directed against idolatry, the practice in which the youthful Muhammad had hitherto been raised. The Nestorian Christians, for whom Bahira was a faithful patron, were strenuous in forbidding the worship of images. They prohibited even their casual exhibition. Indeed, they had taken their scruples on this matter so far that even the cross, a common emblem of Christianity, was included in this prohibition.

Muslim writers stress the point that Bahira had become interested in the youthful Muhammad because he had seen the seal of prophecy on his shoulders. This vision, they swear, gave the monk the conviction that this was the same Prophet whose arrival had been foretold in the Christian Scriptures. The monk is further reported to have told Abu Talib to ensure that his nephew did not fall into the hands of the Jews, thereby forecasting with the eye of prophecy the trouble and opposition that Muhammad was destined to encounter in future from that religious group of people.

We doubt if the above-mentioned encounter had ever taken place. Supposing that it had actually taken place, in that event, the purpose of Bahira's encounter must have revolved

around one of his own agendas. Since the monk was engaged in a mission and predisposed toward proselytizing, he, being a sectarian preacher, needed no miraculous sign to develop an interest in an intelligent and intense Muhammad and to attempt to convert him to the beliefs he was then propagating. He knew that his subject was a receptive listener; and he was also the nephew of the guardian of Ka'aba. He also knew that if he succeeded in implanting the seeds of his teachings into Muhammad's tender mind, he would be spreading, through him, the doctrines of his sect among the people of Mecca, thus advancing his mission by a great stride. This was a good motivation for Bahira to develop an interest in Muhammad. He did not need to see the putative seal of prophecy in order to be convinced with his subject's potentiality and usefulness.

What the monk is reported to have told Abu Talib about Muhammad must have been a precautionary suggestion. In the unsettled state of religious opinions then obtaining in the Arabian Peninsula, the monk wanted to prevent his would-be convert from being engulfed by the Jewish faith, which was then influencing the pagans in its favor. Had it happened, the monk would have lost a good candidate for his faith, and this would have been a great setback for the cause he was then duty-bound to promote.

With Abu Talib, Muhammad returned to Mecca, his mind teeming with wild tales and traditions he picked up during his journey through the desert. He remained deeply impressed by the doctrines imparted to him by Monk Bahira in the Nestorian monastery, which, as we will note shortly, had helped him tremendously later in his life in shaping his own thoughts and religious doctrines.

Muhammad had also developed a mysterious reverence for Syria, believing it to have given refuge to the patriarch Abraham when he had fled from Chaldea, taking with him the doctrine of worshipping one true God. His veneration of this country was so deep that he is said to have initially faced Syria while saying his three daily prayers (Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, as translated by A. Guillaume, p. 135).

While not traveling with a caravan, Muhammad worked as a shepherd. But when he reached his manhood, different persons employed him as their commercial agent, to be with their trade caravans, which traveled to Syria, the Yemen and other destinations on commercial pursuits. The fact that he was given charge of trade by his employers negates the Muslim claim that Muhammad was an illiterate person and, therefore, he could not have said or written what the Quran contains. A person unable to read or write could not have been given the important post of a commercial agent, especially when other Meccans are claimed to have been able to do so. His ability to read and write must also have helped him to get his jobs, for it was in the best interest of his employers to hire someone who was able to keep a written record of the trade activities he engaged himself in, particularly in a situation where he had to travel to, and live in, distant places for a long period of time.

During his journey through Jerusalem, Muhammad had the opportunity of seeing the *Temple of Solomon*, located on the hill of Moriah. King Solomon had built it for Yahweh, who was one among many gods of the ancient people. In the Quran, this Temple is referred to as the *Farthest Mosque* (*Masjid-ul-Aqsa*). His familiarity with this temple helped him

later to describe it vividly when questioned about his alleged ascension to Seventh Heaven during a night.

Muslims firmly believe that Muhammad landed here on his wonder horse, known as *Buraq*, and walked across the plaza -built by Herod to expand the area of the Second Temple- and then ascended to heaven during a night to hold talks with God. When asked to describe the temple in order to prove his claim of the mysterious ascension, God, it said, presented its replica in his vision to enable him to satisfy the incredulity of his Meccan tormentors. During their rule over Jerusalem, Muslims built, near the Temple of Solomon, a mosque known as the *Dome of Rock*, to commemorate the ascension. It is also called the *Mosque of Hadhrat Umar*. This has become the third holiest Muslim place of worship after the *Ka'aba* in Mecca and the *Mosque of the Prophet* in Madina.

King Solomon was the person who had first used the oft-repeated Muslim invocation of God's glory in a letter that he is said to have written to Queen Bilquis of Sheba, some seventeen hundred centuries before the advent of Islam. The invocation, reading as follows, is now used by all Muslims every day before they do anything in their lives:

Bismillah hir Rahman nur Rahim, meaning: In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

We suspect that the pagans used the same invocation before their idol Allah. Muhammad lifted it from the pagan practice and made it an essential component of his religion.

Before we proceed further with our narrative, we may pause here and discuss briefly a psychological theory or observation. It is known that belief can blunt human reasoning and common sense. It has been established that ideas which have been inculcated into a person's mind in

childhood remain in the background of his thinking forever. Consequently, such a person will want to make facts conform to his indoctrinated ideas, which may have no rational validity. Many learned scholars are known to have remained handicapped by this burden, and inhibited from using their common sense. It is not that they never used their common sense in religious enterprises; they used it only when it corroborated with their inculcated ideas.

Mankind's faculties of perception and rationalization have enabled them to find solutions to scientific problems, but in matters of religious and political beliefs, the same species is willing to trample on the evidence of reason and senses.

Part - 3

Evaluating Muhammad from the above perspectives, one would find that he was one of the few exceptional persons who lived on our earth. Though he grew up in a particular religious environment, yet when situations demanded, he was not only able to throw off his childhood indoctrination that evolved around idolatry; he was also able to introduce and adapt himself to a new religion that suited his as well as his people's interests. The stated metamorphosis on Muhammad's part was possible because, apart from being an exceptionally able person, he was also, in his heart, a true nationalist, who, being motivated to help his people, did everything that was necessary to make their lives better.

Contrary to the Muslim conviction that Muhammad was originally created by God as a believer in His Oneness, he is reported to have worshipped and offered sacrifices to Al-Uzza, an idol the pagans believed to be one of the three daughters of God (cf. 42:52). The Quraish venerated Al-Uzza highly, believing that her intercession on their behalf would

be acceptable to God, her father. One of his uncles was named after this idol, and he was called Abd al Uzza, the slave of Uzza, before he was nicknamed Abu Lahab, the Father of Flame, by his Muslim foes.

On Muhammad's pagan backgrounds, F. E. Peters wrote: *"According to a famous, though much edited, tradition, it was young Muhammad who was the pagan and Zayd ibn Amr who was the monotheist"*.

Peters also quoted Zayd ibn Haritha, who is said to have narrated the following story to his son: *"Prophet slaughtered a ewe for one of the idols (nusub min al-ansab); then he roasted it and carried it with him"*. (*Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, p. 126)

While preaching the oneness of God, Muhammad continued, in one form or another, to venerate the idols - up to the time he conquered Mecca- when all the idols housed inside and outside the Ka'aba he had finally destroyed.

In his early life, Muhammad was no different than other youths of his time. He used to "spend his nights in Mecca as young men did" (Ibn Ishaq. Op cit, p. 81) in quarters where whores offered their bodies to youths whom they expected to defend them in times of perils. His marriage with Khadija might have altered his lifestyle to a certain degree, but it was not a good enough reason for him to abandon his earlier habits in their entirety.

Muhammad was also a frequent attainer of fairs, which, in Arabia, were not always the mere venues of business activities, but also occasionally scenes of poetic contests between different individuals, where prizes were adjudged to the victors. Such especially was the case with the fair of Oqadh; winning poems were hung up as trophies on the walls of Ka'aba. At these fairs, also, contestants recited the

popular traditions of the Arabs. They also propagated various religious practices that were then common in the peninsula. From oral sources of this kind, Muhammad gradually accumulated varied information about creeds and doctrines, which he afterwards prescribed for his own followers.

As was the wont of his tribe, Muhammad also used to retire to a cave in *Mount Hira* to practice penance on the 10th of Muharram, a day sacred to the Jews as well. Following the Jewish custom, he also fasted on this day (Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 133. Also see Karen Armstrong's *A History of God*, p. 132).

Use of Alcohol in Islam

Muslims venerate Muhammad as being abstemious in his physical life. This point of view contradicts a natural phenomenon. He was part of a society that must have made him susceptible to all of its practices. If he wanted to have protection of his tribe, without which none could have survived in the hostile Arabian societies, he must have participated in his society's indulgences, which included drinking of a highly stinking liquor called *maghafir*, as well as wine. The native Arabs made *maghafir* by extracting juice of the palm-trees and then fermenting it before consumption (16:67. Also see Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, *Asmani Quran Sharif*, p. 902).

Because the Arabs were generally addicted to drinking, the Quran did not actually describe drinking of alcohol as "*Haram*" or forbidden in the strict sense of the word; what it required of Muslims was not to offer their prayers in a state of drunkenness (4:43), and that they try to "avoid or refrain" from drinking (5:93,94), thus corroborating, in part, the

condition which the Torah and the Bible imposed respectively on Jews and the Christians (Leviticus, 10:9).

Under the circumstances described, it is to be understood that since Muhammad himself drank *maghafir* and wine, he must have thought it to be a prudent decision to remain vague on the subject of drinking. At the same time, he must have considered it politic to ask his followers gently to moderate their intake of alcohol, he himself having experienced, in his own life, the adverse impact of excessive drinking.

When working for various Meccan merchants, Muhammad came to know the amounts of profits they were making out of their businesses. He also realized how they spent their wealth on making their and their children's lives better. The reflections of his own childhood plights and sufferings convinced him that the merchants of Mecca not only neglected the city's poor and needy; they were also unkind to the orphans. This realization turned him against the merchants and he took a vow to force them one day to share their wealth with him and his poor people.

He also had a feeling of ill will towards the custodians of the Ka'aba. He accused them not only of debarring "others from the Sacred Mosque" (8:34); he also questioned their right to be its guardians. He believed that by misusing their authority, they avoided sharing the temple's revenues with those to whom a part of the revenues rightfully belonged. In his judgment, only the God-fearing and those people, who were willing to share the temple's wealth with poor and orphans, had the right to be the Kaba's guardian.

The financial independence that his well-paid job brought him also gave him an opportunity to look back and recount

the treatments he had received from the ladies of Abd al Motalib and Abu Talib's families. He also recalled his abandonment in Mecca by his mother. The combined incidences that he had endured made him bitter. He felt betrayed, especially by the women he expected to be caring, kind and loving.

The reoccurrence in his mind of the past humiliations, betrayal, ill treatments and insults rekindled in him his tribal instincts of retribution. He vowed to avenge his sufferings in a subtle, systematic and effective manner. The treatment of women prescribed in, and the restrictions imposed on them through, the Quran as well as Muhammad's own treatment of his wives should be good examples for proving our point.

With the passage of time, Muhammad became determined in his ambitions. The more he thought about his them, the more plans came to his mind. The more he talked to his friends, the more input he got from them on many of their common concerns. Positive thoughts and responses prepared him to go into offensive to realize what he set out for him to be his goals.

By the age of twenty-five, Muhammad was able to finalize all the details of his scheme. This was also the ripe time for him to get married, but he could not marry any eligible woman. He needed to marry a woman who was willing not only to support him financially, but also to become his partner in the scheme he had prepared for his future implementation. And there were not too many women in Mecca, who could fulfill his criterions, and become his wife.

At the time Muhammad was looking for a suitable bride, there lived in Mecca a widow named **Khadija**, a daughter of Khuwalid, of the tribe of Quraish. She had been twice

married. Her last husband, a wealthy merchant, had recently died and his widow needed to hire help to manage her vast business interests.

Khadija had a cousin by the name of **Waraqah ibn Nufal**. He was a professed monotheist and is believed to have translated portions of the Gospels into Arabic. He wielded much influence over his sister Khadija, she being alleged to be a regular reader of his works (Sir John Glubb, *The Life and Times of Muhammad*, p. 68). Both of them held identical views on religious matters, but in cases where they differed, the opinion of Waraqah always prevailed.

Muhammad had become acquainted with **Khuzaima**, a nephew of Khadija, during his business trips. The latter had seen the former conducting his business in an efficient and profitable manner, and he was impressed. After their return home, they met frequently in and around the temple of Ka'aba, where Muhammad loved to spend his time after carrying out, in the manner of hajj, seven circuits around the shrine.

One day, in course of his conversation with Khuzaima, Muhammad expressed his desire to find a job that would pay him more than what he was being paid by his current employer. Khuzaima told him that his aunt Khadija was looking for a capable agent and that he might be a perfect candidate for the job. He promised to talk to Khadija about him and also try to arrange an interview for him with her.

Khuzaima kept his words, and he talked to Khadija. She agreed to meet the candidate at an early date.

On the appointed date and time, Muhammad presented himself before Khadija. She looked and found a twenty-five years old man standing before her eyes. He was of medium

stature, inclined to slimness, with a large head, broad shoulders, and an otherwise perfectly proportioned body. His hair and beard were thick and black, not altogether straight but slightly curled. His hair reached midway between the lobes of his ears and his shoulders, and his beard was of a length to match. He had a noble breadth of forehead and the ovals of his large eyes were wide, with exceptionally long lashes and extensive brows, slightly arched and not joined. His eyes were said to have been brown or even light brown. His nose was aquiline and his mouth was wide and finely shaped. Although he let his beard grow, he never allowed the hair of his moustache to protrude over his upper lips. His skin was white but tanned by the sun (Description copied from Martin Lings' *Muhammad*, p. 35).

His voice had a touch of music and the sentences he spoke were as rhythmic as the poems of the famed Arabian poet Labid. Khadija was highly impressed, and she hired Muhammad to run her business.

She assigned her nephew Khuzaima and her slave girl Maisara to him so that they could assist him during the trade missions that he was expected to lead to Syria, the Yemen and other destinations from time to time. During all his missions, he performed all of his duties most diligently, thus earning for himself the admiration of his employer. She afterwards sent him to the southern parts of Arabia on similar pursuits, in all of which he achieved successes beyond his employer's expectation. Every opportunity Muhammad got to prove his worth, he did his best to excel it so that he could endear himself to his employer; every time Khadija heard about his success, it enhanced in her not only his esteem, but also his fondness.

While Muhammad was applying all his tools to climb the ladder of success, Khadija turned forty, her age having enabled her to gather the valuable judgment and experience that was necessary to lead a successful life. She longed for a partner who could give her all that she had been missing ever since her last husband had died. She considered many probable candidates, but, at the end, her choice fell on Muhammad.

Although her heart yearned for the fresh and comely youth, she restrained herself before taking steps to fulfill her desire. She had to overcome the ancient Arab tradition that barred women of her age from getting married, together with the objections she expected from her family members. Of particular concern to her was the attitude of her uncle, Amr ibn Asaad, without whose approval it would have been almost impossible for her to marry the man of her choice. She needed to create situations that would not only make the man appear special, but would also force her uncle to sanction her marriage with the man as well.

Soon an opportunity presented itself for Khadija to exploit. One day at noon, she was with her maids outside her house, watching the arrival of the caravan conducted by Muhammad. As it approached its termination point, an errant patch of cloud appeared on the horizon, blocking momentarily the sun's rays from reaching the earth. Seizing the opportunity, she shouted to her maids and exclaimed: "Behold! It is the beloved of Allah, (i.e. the same deity of Ka'aba the pagans called "Allah") who sent two angels to watch over him!"

Her maids strained their eyes and looked out as far as they could see in an effort to locate the angels, but they saw none.

Having inkling of their mistress's passionate feelings towards her heartthrob, Muhammad, they joined hands with her and repeated loudly what she had told them. The purpose behind such an exercise was to boost Muhammad's image, through publicizing what Khadija had made out to be a divine favor as well as to warn her uncle of the consequences from heaven should he reject Muhammad's proposal to marry his niece.

Thus, creating a ground that was going to support her cause, she wished to waste no time and offered herself secretly in marriage to Muhammad through her trusted slave, Maisara. Muhammad had been waiting for such a miracle to happen, and when he got the offer, he accepted it without wasting any time. The major success thus achieved, he, as the Arabian tradition required, needed to make a formal proposal of marriage to Khadija's uncle Amr ibn Assad, who acted then as her guardian, her father having been previously killed in a sacrilegious war.

The Arabian marriage traditions vastly differed from the ones observed by the non-Arab Muslims of the present day. Under the Arab tradition practiced even today, the groom has to propose the marriage to his would-be bride through her parents or guardians, and if they accept the offer, the groom is required to pay dowers to this betrothed's parents or guardians in order to enable him to marry their daughter or ward. Arabian marriages do not involve religious sanctions. Contrary to the Arabian tradition, the non-Arab Muslim brides are required to pay dowers to their grooms and marriages are solemnized, with religion playing a major part.

Following their tradition, Abu Taleb and Hamza, two of Muhammad's uncles, accompanied their nephew to Khadija's house, where she secretly arranged a party. She had not, it

seems, broken the news to her uncle; she intentionally kept him unaware of the significance of the occasion. In the presence of all men, Muhammad sought from Amr ibn Assad his niece Khadija's hand in marriage, hearing which the old man flew into a rage and declined the union. He explained that everything was against such an idea: Muhammad's age, the fact that he was in Khadija's employment and, above all, he did not have enough money to justify his marriage with a wealthy lady. In his mind, the marriage meant dispersing her wealth, instead of keeping it in her family. Subsequent events proved that the old man was right in his thinking.

Khadija had anticipated such a situation and had prepared herself to handle it in a favorable manner. She methodically plied her uncle with wine until he was drunk. On cue, Abu Taleb delivered a forceful speech, laying out all the splendid qualities that his nephew supposedly possessed. After him, Khadija herself made a fiery speech, describing how the angels had protected him from heat, and also eulogizing all the deeds that Muhammad had performed for her and the family. In the end, she exhorted her uncle to recognize Muhammad's favors, and to accept him as his son-in-law.

Following Khadija's speech, all present prompted Amr ibn Assad to respond to it.

Before he knew what all was about, he made a speech approving the marriage. Waraqa ibn Nofal promptly seconded; whereupon, Muhammad at once clothed the old man in the robe which, according to the Arabian tradition, a son-in-law gave his father-in-law at a wedding. Khadija immediately had the contract of marriage drawn and signed, signifying the conclusion of the marriage before her uncle could realize that he was duped and declare the marriage

void. This marriage is believed to have taken place in 595 A.D., when Muhammad was twenty-five and his bride forty years old.

The incident narrated concerning Khadija's marriage with Muhammad deserves a special focus, not only because it was a milestone in the life of the future prophet of Islam, but also because it illustrates the position occupied by women in pre-Islamic Arabia. We have noted that Khadija was an independent woman who ran her own business and it was she, not her future husband, who had first proposed the marriage. Apart from her, we also know that there were other women in pre-Islamic days who not only took part in the affairs of Mecca by the side of their men; they also participated in business ventures without having their men involved in them. They, moreover, often exercised considerable influence as prophetesses or as poetesses.

At the annual fairs in the neighborhood of Mecca, particularly at the fair of Oqhad, women are known to have entered along with men in poetic contests and recited their prize-winning poems before the public.

The above observations provide us a glimpse of the extent of freedom that the women of Arabia enjoyed before the dawn of Islam and negate the claim of the Muslim doctors who tell us that it was Islam which granted them the freedom with which they have been living their lives in our modern world. In reality, the contrary is the fact. It is, in truth, Islam which has snatched away much of women's previous freedom and liberties, and made them slaves to the whims and fancies of their men.

MUHAMMAD'S LIFE STYLE AFTER HIS MARRIAGE WITH KHADIJA

As Muhammad expected, his marriage with Khadija changed his life. It placed him among the most wealthy and influential of his native city. He was no more a servant; to the contrary, he became the owner of his wife's wealth and business. People began to respect him. They also allowed him to participate in both their casual and formal meetings, a privilege that was denied him before on account of his circumstances.

During this time, he lived in a household where the resident oracle influenced him greatly in his religious opinions. This was his wife's cousin **Waraqah ibn Nofal**, a man of speculative mind and flexible faith; originally a Jew, subsequently a Christian, at the same time, being a pretender of astrology.

After the marriage, Muhammad continued to work for his wife as before but now with a freedom that afforded him much time to build his image among the people. To achieve his mission, he carried himself well socially. He succeeded in establishing himself as a role model among the people, not only by dispensing favors but also by dealing with them even-handedly in situations that offered him the sought-after opportunities to get himself involved. Herein, we shall describe a crisis that involved the Meccan people and which, we are told, he helped resolve amicably thereby earning for himself the admiration of the people.

In 605 A.D., when Muhammad was thirty-five years old, the people of Quraish decided to roof the Ka'aba, which, it appears, had hitherto consisted of only four walls with no covering on top. An examination of the masonry revealed that

the existing walls were too weak to support the weight of a roof, whereupon, the Meccans decided to demolish the entire structure, and, in its place, to build a new edifice with a roof on top of it. After building the walls, the people faced the dilemma of finding the wooden planks and a carpenter to make the roof, for neither of these two existed at the time in the entire land of Arabia.

During their plight, it so happened that a ship belonging to a Greek merchant wrecked, possibly on the coral reefs of Jeddah. This accident provided the desperate Meccans with the ship's timbers for the roof, which an Egyptian Copt Carpenter who happened to be in Mecca at the time undertook to erect at their behest.

The story of roofing the Ka'aba brings to light an important aspect of the Meccan life of the time. The fact that the temple itself had no roof bolsters the position of those who maintain that since the "*House of God*" had, in all probability, consisted merely of tents surrounded by walls, the Meccans of the time must also have lived, out of compulsion, in homes built without roofs.

A large black stone, possibly a meteorite, had been built into the wall of the primitive Ka'aba. The Meccans as well as the pagan pilgrims regarded it with peculiar veneration. When the building of the walls reached the level at which the black stone had formerly been planted, each of the clans of the Quraish demanded the privilege of placing the stone back in its original position. Excited and heated debate ensued, and an outbreak of violence, bordering on bloodshed, seemed imminent.

At this juncture, Abu Umaiya of the clan of Bani Makhzoom, said to be the oldest man of the tribe of Quraish,

came up with a suggestion. He proposed that all present should agree that the first man who entered the court of the Ka'aba from that moment on should be asked to judge the dispute. All agreed and began to await the arrival of such a man.

A few minutes later, they saw Muhammad entering the sacred premises. Informed of the pact that the Meccans had agreed to, he called for a cloak, spread it on the ground and laid the black stone upon it. He then asked one representative of each clan to take hold of the edge of the cloak and to raise the stone together to the required height. Once this was done, he, with his own hands, laid the stone in position in the wall, thus resolving a deadly issue with a brilliant presence of mind.

This episode is said to have enhanced his stature and esteem, prompting people to refer their disputes to him for resolution.

THE CALL FROM GOD

In the period following Muhammad's marriage with Khadija but before the commencement of his preaching of the oneness of God, many religiously sensitive men in Mecca are said to have withdrawn from the idol worshipping of Ka'aba. Prominent among them were: 1. Waraqa ibn Nofal, 2. Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh, 3. Uthman ibn al-Huwayrith and 4. Zaid ibn Amr. Many other pagans also converted to monotheism with the realization that their people had corrupted the religion of their father Abraham and that the stones they circled around were of no account. In conclusion, they wished to see a change in form and substance of their antiquated religion. Others, having grown disillusioned with Judaism and Christianity, went their ways in the search

elsewhere in the land, seeking *Hanifiya*, the pure religion of Abraham. (Ibn Ishaq, op. cit. p. 99)

They were particularly interested in seeing Hanifiya introduced once again, for the reason that they believed that when Abraham, their distant forefather, had control over the House of God, he shared its income with all of Mecca's people, thus helping many among them avoid hunger and destitution. The present custodians were selfish, who not only ate up all its income, but also maintained a constant grip on their extra religious activities. They wanted all injustices and restrictions from the Kaba's custodians to end.

The manipulative and opportunistic Waraqa ibn Nofal, having observed the Meccan's suffering and disenchantment with idol worshipping, felt confident, at this stage, in introducing his doctrine of One God as well as the concept of resurrection. As he could not do it himself, he began looking for someone from among the influential tribes of Mecca to undertake the mission on his behalf. He consulted his sister Khadija, and both of them found a candidate in their midst by the name of Muhammad Mustafa, who fulfilled the criteria both of them considered necessary to accomplish the arduous and risky task. Upon confiding in him, they found him more than willing to oblige them with his cooperation - not merely for their sake but for his own cause as well, for he himself cherished a dream to dislodge the Kaba's custodians from their positions by introducing monotheism together with reining in the Meccan trading community, whom he considered to be a selfish and greedy bunch of despicable people.

Since his marriage with Khadija, Muhammad had plenty of time to reflect on what he had heard and learned during his

caravan journeys and also from the people he had the opportunity of mingling with when they came to Mecca, either on pilgrimage or for trade. The indoctrination of the hermit Bahira also recurred in his mind, giving him the conviction that the idolatrous pagans should be made to worship only one true Allah, whose nemesis already lived in the form of a statue in the Ka'aba and that this Allah should rule their hearts and minds as well. Muhammad picked up the name *Allah* to represent his lone God for the reason that the pagans were already acquainted with this God, making it thus unnecessary for him to explain afresh his nature and attributes to them.

Thus determined, Muhammad proceeded to implement his concepts and doctrines, most of which he borrowed from Judaism and Christianity, and haphazardly stored in his memory. His own preparations notwithstanding, he recognized the fact that his mission was going to present him with enormous challenges, to overcome which, he wished to learn more about the Jewish *Torah* as well as about the Christian Scriptures. He also desired to know as much as was possible about the *Talmud* and *Midrash traditions*, then current among the Jewish groups. Waraqa concurred, and they decided that they should begin the teaching and learning process forthwith.

The process could not be begun from Muhammad's or Waraqa's home, lest it be known to other people of the city. Muhammad, perhaps influenced by those Christian hermits whom he had seen on his trips to Syria living in caves, chose one of the caves of Mount Hira for achieving their purpose. Muhammad and Waraqa took to spending most of their time in the cave, often joined by Khadija, who, as we have noted

earlier, is known to have studied the Gospels at the urging of her cousin Waraqa. Waraqa found his student to have an uncommonly retentive memory and a voracious appetite for learning. He poured out all the knowledge of Midrash and Talmud that he had, knowing fully well that Muhammad, during the propagation of his faith, would have to depend heavily on what he taught him before the commencement of his mission.

Part - 4

While the educational process and training was continuing, Waraqa recognized the fact that he alone could not prepare Muhammad fully for the momentous mission he was soon to embark upon and that if he wanted to see his surrogate succeed, he then must seek the help of one whose erudition on the subjects he was imparting to his student was superior to his own.

Waraqa knew a monk by the name of **Adas**; some say his name was Suhaib ibn Sinan, who was well-versed in the desired subjects, but spoke in Hebrew. Waraqa, himself knowing Hebrew well, enlisted his help, and both of them began teaching Muhammad all that they knew about the Jewish and Christian religions.

Perhaps, the Quran alluded to this same monk Adas or Suhaib (16:103; also see N. J. Dawood's *The Koran*, p. 195), while refuting the pagans, who accused Muhammad of being taught all that he spoke of, including the details of heaven and hell, by a human being and not, as he claimed, by God.

FIRST REVELATION

Muhammad continued the process of his learning for a long time; some say, without substantiating their claim, for

fifteen years. Then suddenly one night in the month of Ramadhan in the year 610 AD, when he was forty years of age, he declared that he received *revelations* from God, and that the deity appointed him his *last Prophet and Messenger* on earth.

The age forty has a great significance for Muslims. The Quran declares that, upon reaching the age of forty, they should pray to God and thank him for the favors he has bestowed on them and their parents and also that they should do good works that will please him. The Quran requires Muslims to be kind to their parents, for the reason that their mothers bear them with much pain, and with much pain they bring them to the world. It also requires them to be kind and thankful to their parents (46:15); it does not, however, require them to love their parents for what they did to them before and after their birth.

One Muslim school of thought reports that Muhammad had told his wife Khadija that while he was in the cavern, angel **Gabriel** appeared before him "in a dazzling human form" (R. V. C. Bodley, op.cit. p. 56) and ordered him to "recite in the name of thy Lord" (96:1). The Quran tells the Muslims that all angels can fly, each of them having at least a pair of wings (35:1), except for Gabriel, who is said to have six hundred of them (Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Tafsir Ma'ariful Quran*, p. 764)

Muhammad appears to have repudiated later his aforesaid statement when he said the following through the Quran:

Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel - for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by God's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, (2:97)

This verse [*ayat*] implies clearly that what the Quran contains are the words that angel Gabriel had imparted to Muhammad through his heart and also suggests that the angel had never appeared to him in person. Accordingly, we may conclude safely that **the contents of the Quran are Muhammad's own words, which he used to describe as the "inspiration" that the angel, at God's command, had put in his heart,** or should we say, in his mind?

The mode of revelation notwithstanding, Muhammad, similar to the ancient Hebrew prophets before him -who were often reluctant to utter the words of God- and protesting that he was unschooled, refused to comply with Gabriel's order (Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, p. 137). A storied hadith (Muhammad's words) attributed to his youngest wife, Aisha, recounts that Gabriel pressed Muhammad's chest against his own three times (Martin Lings, *op. cit.* p. 43) in order to make him follow his orders. Instantly, he felt his understanding illumined with celestial light and he read the first five verses of the Sura or chapter, called Iqra (Sura 96), written on a banner that he saw hanging at the edge of the nearest sky to earth. When he finished the perusal, the heavenly Messenger announced, "*Oh, Muhammad, of a verity, thou art the Prophet of God and I am his angel Gabriel!*"

After the incident, we are told, Muhammad was much horrified to think that he might have become a mere disrespectable *kahin*, whom people consulted if one of their camels went missing. Jinn, one of the spirits who were thought to haunt the deserts and who could be capricious and lead people into error, supposedly possessed a *kahin*. Poets also believed that their personal Jinn possessed them.

Hasan ibn Thabit, a poet of Medina who later became a Muslim and Muhammad's personal poet-laureate, says that when he received his poetic vocation, his personal Jinn had appeared to him and, throwing him to the ground, forced the inspired words from his mouth.

This was the only form of inspiration that was familiar to Muhammad, and the thought that he might have become a *majnoon* (Jinni-possessed) filled him with so much despair that he no longer wished to live (Karen Armstrong, op. cit. p. 137 ff). His wife, Khadija, reportedly talked him out of his suicidal intention.

It was at a much later stage that God told Muhammad that He had deputed him not only as a prophet for men, He also had given him the responsibility to convert the errant Jinns (Washington Irving, op. cit. p. 71) to the righteous path of Islam, a task that God certified Muhammad to have fulfilled to His fullest satisfaction.

The Muslim belief that Muhammad had a physical encounter with angel Gabriel is more of a myth than a fact. It was concocted by the later days Muslims in order to boost his credential as a prophet. Not only many cynical people disbelieve it, even many Muslim scholars discount this alleged involvement of the angel with Muhammad as being nothing but an imaginative falsehood of some of the zealots of the Islamic faith.

Professor Fazlur Rahman is one among the prominent Muslim scholars, who repudiates the alleged affair without any hesitation. He maintains that Muhammad did not encounter Gabriel in the flesh and that the contents of the Quran are the result of his internal mystical experience, generated in his heart (or mind?) by God's inspiration (4:163)

"in a state of vision or quasi-dream." Muhammad himself, Rahman continues, had characterized the state in which he received his revelations by saying, "*Then I woke up*," implying clearly that Muhammad had received his first and all other subsequent revelations in dreams. In this connection, Rahman states, "This idea of the externality of the angel and the Revelation has become so ingrained in the general Muslim mind that the real picture is anathema to it," emphasizing, at the same time, the fact that "a religion cannot lie on purely spiritualized dogmas and [that] reification is necessary even if only to serve the purpose of a vessel for the spirit" (*Islam*, p.13).

Rahman's position differs somewhat from a hadith attributed to Hadhrat Zubair. Muhammad is reported to have told him that while he was in the cave of Hira, he heard a voice calling him by name and declaring him the prophet of God. He searched all around but found no one. He then looked up and saw an angel floating between the earth and sky (53:6-11 & 81:23).

Convulsing with extreme fear, Muhammad ran home. His wife Khadija tended to him and wrapped him up in a mantle. After a while, angel Gabriel appeared at his home and commanded him to "*Arise and deliver thy warning, O thou wrapped up!*" According to this hadith, Sura or chapter Muddaththir (Sura 74) was the first Sura that was revealed to Muhammad and not Sura Iqra (Sura 96), as believed by the majority of Muslims.

Contrary to the aforesaid hadith, the majority of Muhammad's biographers concede that he received all of his revelations from God, either in dream or during seizures.

During the painful episodes of seizures, Muhammad heard bells ringing in his ears and pearl-sized drops of perspiration trickled from his body even during the winter (Martin Ling, op. cit, p. 245). When fully recovered, he narrated the contents of the vision.

Those observations of Muhammad's behavior are indicative of the fact that he suffered from *epilepsy* or *schizophrenia*, two medical conditions that were a mystery to the people of his time. Dr. Gustav Weil, in a note to *Muhammad Der Prophet*, discusses the question of Muhammad's being subject to attacks of epilepsy, a physical condition which has generally been represented as a slander, concocted by his enemies, as well as by the Christian writers. His ailment appears, however, to have been asserted by some of the oldest Muslim biographers, now labeled as "hired biographers" by some modern Muslim writers (Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, *Muhammad and the Quran*); it having been established as being a genuine assertion on the authority of other writers, who were contemporaneous to their time. He would be seized, they said, with violent trembling followed by a kind of swoon or, more accurately, convulsion, during which perspiration would stream from his forehead in the coldest weather; he would lie with his eyes closed, foaming at the mouth, and bellowing like a young camel.

Aisha, one of his wives, and Zaid, one of his disciples, are among the persons cited as testifying to that effect. They regarded the seizures at such times as being under the influence of a revelation. He is believed to have similar attacks, however, in Mecca before he became a prophet, and at a time when God was not supposed to give him any revelation.

Unaware of Muhammad's medical condition, Khadija feared that he must have been possessed by an evil Jinn's spirits, and wanted to solicit the aid of a conjuror to exorcise them, but Muhammad forbade her. He did not like anyone to see him during those paroxysms.

The epileptic attacks did not always precede his visions. Harith ibn Hashem, it is narrated, once asked him in what manner he received his revelations. "*Often,*" Muhammad replied, "*the angel appears to me in a human form, and speaks to me. Sometimes I hear sounds like the tinkling of a bell, but see nothing.* (Ringing in the ears is a symptom of epilepsy). *When the invisible angel has departed, I am possessed of what he has revealed.*" Some of his revelations, he professed, reached him directly from God, others in dreams; for the dreams of prophets, he used to say, are revelations (Washington Irving, op.cit, p.43 & 44).

THE PREACHING

After Muhammad came home with the news that God ordained him his prophet, it was his wife, Khadija, who not only comforted him in his fear, but she also feigned to have believed in what he had told her -thereby becoming the first person to convert to the new faith of Islam. To accelerate the success of her husband's mission, she even phrased the words of the *Kalima Tayyaba*, by invoking which a non-Muslim instantly becomes a Muslim (Khalid Latif Gauba, *The Prophet of the Desert*, p. 33). The kalima, coined by Khadija, reads: *La Ilaha-ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah*, meaning: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger".

Waraqa ibn Nofal, her aged cousin, also played his pre-arranged role. Using his scholarly authority, he declared that what his surrogate had claimed was not only true but he was,

moreover, the same prophet whose impending arrival was foretold by other religious scriptures, thereby ensuring Muhammad's success. His support of Muhammad notwithstanding, Waraqa never accepted Islam and died a Christian.

Following Khadija, others who converted to Islam were: 1. Ali ibn Abu Taleb. He was a ten-year-old cousin of Muhammad who lived under his care and who later on married his daughter Fatima. 2. Zaid ibn Harith, a young freed slave whom Muhammad, for some time, had adopted as his son and came to be known as Abu Zaid, father of Zaid. 3. Abdullah Atik ibn Abu Qahafa, who is universally known as Abu Baker, "*the father of the virgin she-camel*," a title he earned after he let a 50 plus year-old Muhammad marry his six-year-old infant daughter. He was one of Muhammad's closest friends. 4. Abdu Amr, son of Awf, a distant kinsman of Muhammad's mother, Amina and 5. Abu Ubayda, son of al-Jarrah, who belonged to the clan of Bani al-Harith.

As Muhammad was already convinced that the early stage of his mission was going to be perilous, he planned to take his early steps in secrecy. He apprehended hostility on every side: from his immediate kindred, the Quraishites of the line of Hashim whose power and prosperity Muhammad identified not only with idolatry, but also with their greed and selfishness, and still more from the rival line of Abd Shams, who were ever ready to dispossess the Hashemites of the guardianship of Ka'aba, which generated great amounts of revenue for its keepers. Abu Sofian, son of Harb and a grandson of Omayya, as well as the great-grandson of Abd Shams, headed the later group of the rivals. He was an able and ambitious man; he is said to have great wealth and

influence over the people of Mecca. For Muhammad, he proved, for some time, to be a redoubtable opponent.

Accordingly, he began propagating his new religion slowly, and discreetly, insomuch that for the first three years the number of his converts did not exceed forty; those, for the most part, being young persons, strangers, and the downtrodden slaves.

For his followers, Muhammad introduced the three daily prayers, which he borrowed from the old pagan rites. Fearing ridicule from the pagans to the manner in which he wanted his followers to perform their prayer, he held his prayer congregation in private, either in the house of one of the initiated, or in a cave near the city of Mecca. His secrecy, however, did not, for long, protect him from the pagans' outrage.

The pagans discovered Muhammad's secret meetings; in one of them, a rabble broke out and a scuffle ensued. In it, Saad, a Muslim, wounded one of the pagan opponents of his faith. This feat on his part earned him the first place among all the Muslims, who shed blood in the cause of Islam. The discovery of his meeting place and the consequential solicitude to which he found himself subjected, sapped Muhammad's spirits and increased the perturbation of his mind. He looked worn out and haggard, with abstraction having overtaken his hitherto mental sharpness. His associates noticed his altered mien and dreaded an attack of illness; his pagan distracters scoffingly accused him of mental hallucination and rejected his call to embrace his faith.

Abu Bakr and Uthman enjoyed strong protection from their clans. As a result of this, they never faced any violence from the pagans, despite the fact that they had become

Muslim a long time ago, and accompanied Muhammad on every trip he made to preach his religion. Even the young Ali was neither harassed nor treated harshly either by the children of his age or by the elders for having become a Muslim at his tender age.

The small community of the Meccan Christians maintained a position of neutrality, being confident that since Muhammad was married to one of them who wielded considerable influence on him, he would not harm them even if he won his struggle, nor would his opponents cause them any trouble, should they be able to defeat him, for the reason that they were never a cause of concern for their overwhelmingly large neighbors. They were absolutely right. Muhammad never appeared to them as a threat; rather, he not only declared them to be in love with the Muslims (5:85), he also provided them with protection by declaring them Muslims (5:114).

After brooding silently over the problem his campaign faced for some time and, on being prodded by Khadija and Waraqa, Muhammad threw off all his reserves and, displaying greater enthusiasm, began to go about openly proclaiming his doctrines and presenting himself as a prophet, sent by God to put an end to idolatry as well as to mitigate the rigors of the Jewish and Christian laws. The hills of Safa and Marwa, sanctified by the traditions of Hagar and Ishmael, became his preaching grounds, and the Mount of Hira his sanctuary, where he retired when overtaken by the pagans' tortuous interrogations, only to return from it after preparing himself with new arguments and pronouncements, which he always tried to pass off as "*Revelations from God*."

Unimpressed, the pagans continued to ridicule him for assuming an apostolic character. Those, who had seen him as a boy about the streets of Mecca, and afterwards occupied in all ordinary concerns of life, felt greatly hurt by his insulting remarks on their ancestral religion as well as on their intellect, which he considered to be inferior to that of his own. They also resented his insolent attitude towards those who mattered in the Meccan society, but whom he deemed to be his enemy.

Furthermore, he belittled them by claiming that only he knew all that existed in heaven. Additionally, to add salt to their injury, he created an atmosphere of enmity in Mecca, which separated a son from his parents, and a brother from his siblings. As if not satisfied with the extent of havoc that he already wrought upon their blood relationship, he was depriving them of their livelihood as well by creating the turmoil, which, in its own turn, was discouraging people from visiting Mecca, either on call of trade or on pilgrimage.

Despite the fact that Muhammad had torn apart all the fabrics of their social and religious lives, the pagans are not known to have ever demonstrated any violence against his person. They never abused him, nor did they ever try to cause him bodily harm. One of the retaliations they occasionally subjected him to was their sneer. Seeing him pass them, they used to exclaim, "*Behold the grandson of Abd al Mutallib who pretends to know what is going on in heaven!*" Some, who had witnessed his fits of mental excitement, called him insane; a few others declared that he was possessed by a devil, and some accused him of practicing sorcery and magic. On a particular occasion, some pagans are reported also to have thrown on his body a bundle of dirt, which caused him no

injury or pain. But when the pagans failed, even after employing the above gentle methods to prevent him from insulting their gods and religion, they did not turn violent against him; instead, they commissioned a poet to counter his moves with his poetic lampoons.

The poet engaged by the pagans was none other than the youthful **Amru ibn al-Aas**. His mother was a prostitute (we have mentioned her earlier in our presentation), who practiced her profession in Mecca. She was a very beautiful woman, whose list of paramours included all the nobles of the city who existed in the tribe of Quraish. When she gave birth to Amru, all of her lovers laid their equal claim on the paternity of the child. As the newborn most resembled Aas, he received the designation of *ibn al-Aas*, the son of Aas.

Nature was very kind to the child. He had all the qualities of a genius. At an early age, he became one of the most popular poets of Arabia. People distinguished him for the pungency of his satirical compositions, which he delivered with a captivating sweetness. He was a delight for his listeners, who paid close attention to what he had to say in his poems.

Pitted against Muhammad, Amru made great efforts in countering his proselytizing campaigns with lampoons and humorous madrigals. The captivating effect of his compositions already imprinted on their minds, people not only circulated them widely, but also carried them to distant places. People's involuntary action, though, proved to be a temporary setback for Muhammad, but, in the end, even Amru's effusions failed to stop him from carrying out his proselytizing campaigns.

Those of the pagans who had traits of neutrality in their character demanded of Muhammad supernatural proofs of what he asserted. His reply may be gathered from his words in the Quran; it being evasive to the point that he did not hesitate to designate the Quran as being a miracle from God. Unsatisfied, they demanded palpable evidence -miracles addressed to the senses- that he should cause the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, or the dead to rise. Muhammad, as usual, not only avoided those demands, he also denounced them for the same. At the same time, he threatened them with dire consequences from God, if they persisted in what he considered to be their unjustified demands.

Al Maalem, an Arabian writer, recorded that some of Muhammad's disciples at one time joined with the pagan multitude in their demand for miracles, and besought him to prove at once the divinity of his mission by turning the hill of Safa into gold. Being thus closely urged, he took to prayer, and after finishing it, assured his followers as well as his opponents that the angel Gabriel had appeared to him, and informed him that should God grant his prayer and work the desired miracle, all those who disbelieved would be exterminated. In pity to the multitude, he implored God not to cause the miracle thus permitting the hill of Safa to remain in its pristine state. He continued to insist that the Quran was his miracle, and that beyond it he had no power to perform additional miracles to satisfy their incredulity.

Part - 5

We have reached, in our narrative, the fifth year of Muhammad's mission. From time to time, he did face the pagans' opposition to his preaching, but they had never

succeeded in shutting him off completely. In spite of enjoying an almost unrestricted freedom to engage himself in his proselytizing activities, Muhammad, it seems, had not been able to secure more than sixty to seventy converts over such a long period of time.

At this stage, we want to digress from our narrative, and visualize what stressful days Muhammad must have been passing, after being in his mission for five devastating years, in the religiously charged atmosphere of Mecca.

As we have mentioned earlier in this presentation, **it was Khadija who, along with her cousin, had commissioned Muhammad to found in Mecca a religion that was intended to establish the unity of a single God.** He had undertaken the mission not only for his wife's sake, but also for his own reasons, which we have stated earlier, being assured that she was going to put her entire wealth at his disposal so that he could use it for achieving their common goal.

For five years, Muhammad lived on his wife's wealth. He also used it to feed most of the new Muslims, many among whom were slaves and the downtrodden. A good part of her wealth also had to be used as bribes for those pagans who were inclined towards Islam, but refrained from converting to it. In short, he used his wife's bequeathed wealth for all the purposes he considered necessary for achieving what he had set out to achieve five years ago.

But when his resources were almost exhausted, with him taking no part in trade activities for a long time to recoup his wife's expanded wealth, he began to feel the crunch that invariably follows such a situation. He, therefore, began to search for the ways through which he could reduce the pressure on his depleting coffer.

To understand what Muhammad might have been thinking to ease pressure over his ever-decreasing resource, we need to consider certain conditions that were prevailing in the Arabian society at that period of time. We have mentioned that Muhammad had initially launched his movement to force the pagans to worship a lone Allah. It was followed by his attack on the rich merchants of Mecca for the reason that they prided in their wealth and refused to share their privileges with the poor, orphan and the needy. Though the latter issue had won him some support from the common folks, he could not have neglected the crippling effect that it had produced in the lives of the people he sought to help. It was in the background of this situation that Muhammad had, at one stage, come up with a reconciliatory plan, aimed at appeasing his opponents. Not fully realizing the implication of his plan, he announced that he accepted the divinity of the "Lord of the House," whom the pagans worshipped in the form of a statue they had installed in the Ka'aba. He followed this concession by permitting his followers to worship the idols of al-Lat, al-Uzza and al-Manat together with the pagans. They [pagans] were exuberant, thinking that their days of polemics and hardship were over. But their happiness did not last long, and they realized it very soon. To the Muslims, the last concession is known as "*Gharaniq*." According to one Muslim writer, it had taken place in Mecca in late 5th or early 6th year of his preaching. (Dr. Majid Ali Khan, *The Holy Verses*, pp.32-37)

He had adopted the reconciliatory policies to ease the difficulties of the poorer section of the Meccan population so that he could continue to have their support. He, however, withdrew the concession, claiming it to have been a *Satanic act*, when he realized that, by authorizing the pagans to worship their idols, he had retracted his stand on the issue of

absolute monotheism, thus jeopardized his claim of prophethood as well. To extract himself from the alleged faux pas, he put the blame on the Satan, who, he said, had put the words of the declaration in his mouth, despite him having had obtained full protection from God in order to protect himself from the devil's influence. The reversal of his later policy did not bode well with the pagans, and they were infuriated. Considering Muhammad's retraction as an act of betrayal, they decided to oppose his religion more vigorously. Had Muhammad not had his uncle Abu Talib's protection, they might even have caused him bodily harm.

The fiasco and the atmosphere of distrust created by the abrogation of his compromising announcements notwithstanding, we must praise Muhammad's sense of pragmatism, which he always exhibited in all difficult times. To a great extent, this quality of his was responsible for making him, in the long run, a successful person.

Encouraged by his pragmatic thoughts, he decided to send a delegation of neo-Muslims to **Abyssinia** [Ethiopia] in 615 AD, probably with the following objectives in his mind:

In the last five years, his achievements, if any, were dismal. In the same period, he saw the pagan opposition to his cause growing. He also saw his resources depleting, with no recourse being available to him to replenish them. Although Abu Talib's protection had shielded him from his opponents, but he saw many of his followers, who had no social status or protection, undergoing physical torture at the hands of their masters or employers. Moreover, he, too, had failed to provide gainful employment to those who had forsaken their jobs, and become his disciples.

Consequently, he sensed a suppressed disaffection taking hold of his followers. He, therefore, needed to divert their attention to a different direction. He also needed to take steps not only to invigorate his followers' faith in his leadership, but also to contain his opponents' hostility to his cause.

With the stated objectives in mind, Muhammad began to explore possibilities in right earnest. While carrying on with his exploration, he came to know much about **Abyssinia** [Ethiopia]. He learned that a Christian ruled it, and that he was tolerant of other religions. He also learned that the Negus harbored an ambition on Mecca, and that he was not in favor of the Persians spreading their net of influence over the citadel of pagan worship.

In the final analysis, Abyssinia appeared to Muhammad to be a perfect country of choice to which he decided to turn for help. Accordingly, he prepared and dispatched a delegation of his followers to Abyssinia. It consisted of eleven members, including Ruqayyah, his daughter. Uthman, her husband, was appointed its leader.

We assume that Muhammad had charged the leader of the delegation to achieve the following objectives:

1. Muhammad was aware that the Abyssinians were eager to regain their lost dominion of Arabia; and also that to help their Byzantium allies who had just suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Persians, they were willing to listen to any ideas that were likely to divert their enemy's attention. Capitalizing on the Abyssinians' focus, the delegation was to convince the Negus to attack Mecca and to take over its administration. Other members of the delegation had instructions to narrate, in Negus' court, horrible stories of how their pagan masters were not only torturing them, but

also starving them to death. Being convinced, should the Negus take over Mecca, he was to choose Muhammad to become its ruler. His ascension to power would have helped him in achieving all his objectives easily, and in a shorter period of time.

2. Should the Negus refuse to do what Muhammad wished him to do, the leader and his wife were to return to Mecca, leaving behind the rest of his delegation members in Abyssinia. The "refugees" were expected to find jobs among the people who were tolerant towards the people of other religions. This latter scheme had a two-fold purpose: Their staying back in Abyssinia not only would have made them beyond the reach of their masters' torture, it would also have freed Muhammad from the responsibility which required him to meet the demands of their livelihood.

3. Those of his followers who had mercantile background were to explore the likelihood of developing aggressive business connections with the Abyssinian people, which, if materialized, would have greatly undermined the monopolistic position of the pagan niggards.

4. The continuous presence of Muhammad's disciples in Abyssinia would have created a base there for Muhammad himself. If he ever had felt unsafe in Mecca, he could easily have gone over to Abyssinia and lived safely among his disciples. From here, he could plot and try to take over Mecca at an opportune time in future.

The Meccans suspected what Muhammad wanted to achieve by sending a group of his people to Abyssinia. As its result, the Meccans had his mission followed by a mission of their own. It was charged with the responsibility of

countering the Muslim allegations against them and to have them expelled by the Negus.

After hearing both the parties, Negus declined the Muslim request of invading Mecca, but allowed them to live in his country. The pagans were happy with his decision.

Contrary to what we have stated above, most Muslim writers maintain that the Muslims had migrated to Abyssinia only to escape from the persecution of their enemies. This, though, is partly true, but not the whole truth. In support of our hypothesis, we submit the following:

At the time we are talking about here, there was no police or law enforcing agencies in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. But the lack of these agencies, however, did not mean that the nomads and the sedentary Arabs had no rules to govern certain aspects of their lives. In fact, they did have rules which regulated their conducts.

The Arabs had, over a long period of time, developed a system of protection, which a particular tribe or clan gave to its members. Without having protection, it was impossible for anyone to survive in the harsh environments of the desert. This particular system of protection had made it dangerous for a man to lay his hands on a member of another tribe or clan. If any member of a clan attacked a protected member of another clan, the victim's clan exacted vengeance or a blood-wit from the clan of the offending person. This system worked well for the Arabs and it helped them keep incidences of death through violence under control. It was this clan protection which his uncle Abu Talib made use of, to protect Muhammad from the pagans' physical assault. When his uncle died, Muhammad had to obtain the protection of Mutim Ibn Adi, the chief of the Nofal clan of Quraish.

Without his protection, Muhammad could not have survived in Mecca.

Uthman Ibn Affan, who headed the Muslim delegation to Abyssinia, enjoyed the full protection of his clan. It was on account of this fact that he was never manhandled or assaulted by his enemies. Moreover, it is claimed that he had an independent source of income that supported his as well as his family members' lives. When he faced no threat to his life, and had a secured means of livelihood at his disposal, what had made him and his wife migrate to Abyssinia must not be a very difficult matter for us to understand. And our understanding is: Muhammad had chosen Uthman and his wife to represent him before the Negus of Abyssinia, and to try to achieve those tasks which we have mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs of this presentation.

In Mecca, meanwhile, Muhammad continued the propagation of his faith and kept on trying to win converts to his faith. The pagans took all peaceful steps to deter him from propagating his anti-pagan faith, but they failed to achieve their objective.

Frustrated, they passed a decree banishing him and all who embraced his faith. Sensing the ferocity of the impending storm, Muhammad took refuge in the house of a disciple named **Orkham**. His house was situated on the hill of **Safa**. This hill was renowned in Arabian tradition as the place at which Adam and his wife (Quranic reference to Eve, who is not mentioned in it by a name) lived together, having previously been reunited at the plains of Arafat after their long solitary wandering all about the earth, following their expulsion from Paradise. It was, likewise, connected in

tradition with the story of Hagar, Abraham's concubine, and her son Ishmael.

Muhammad remained in his sanctuary for a month, continuing his revelations and drawing to him converts from various parts of Arabia. Eventually, the Quraishites caught hold of his whereabouts. He had an uncle by the name of Amru Ibn Hashim. The Quraishites had given him the name of *Abu 'Ihoem*, or *Father of Wisdom*, on account of his sagacity. The Muslims had changed it to *Abu Jahl*, *Father of Folly*, due to his opposition to his nephew and Islam. The later appellation has remained stuck till these days to his name, who is seldom mentioned by zealous Muslims without the ejaculation, "*May he be accursed of Allah!*" This uncle sought him out, heaved insults in vituperative language, and even tried reportedly to maltreat him physically. His outrage was reported to **Hamza**, another uncle of Muhammad, as he was returning from his hunting trip. He was at that time not a Muslim, but was pledge-bound to protect his nephew.

Marching, with his bow in his hand, to the place where Abu Jahl was vaunting his recent triumph to some of the Quraishites, Hamza dealt him a blow that inflicted a grievous wound on his head. After some altercation that followed the attack, Hamza declared that he had right then become a Muslim and took the oath of adhesion to Muhammad instantaneously, thus greatly boosting the morale of his nephew.

Abu Jahl's prestige and esteem injured, he vowed to avenge the perpetrator. He had a nephew by the name of **Omar Ibn al Khattab**. He was twenty-six years of age, having a gigantic stature, a prodigious strength, and a great courage. He was reportedly so tall that even when seated, he dwarfed

those who remained standing. Reputed to have been a heavy drinker, he was also known to beat his wife habitually. Instigated by his uncle Abu Jahl, this fierce man pledged to penetrate Muhammad's hideout and to inflict upon him or on Hamza the injury that the latter had inflicted upon Abu Jahl.

On his way to Orkham's house, in which Hamza along with Muhammad was lodged, he met a Quraishite to whom he disclosed his design. The Quraishite was a secret convert to Islam and sought to turn him away from his violent errand. He told him to check if anyone from his own family was guilty of heresy, before he went and harmed Muhammad or his uncle. Taken aback, he wanted to know who among his family members had renounced his ancestral religion. The informant gave Omar the names of his sister Amina and her husband Said.

Omar changed his course and hastened to his sister's dwelling. Entering it abruptly, it is said, he found his sister and her husband reading the Quran. Said attempted to conceal it, but his confusion convinced Omar of the truth of the accusation and heightened his fury. In his rage, he struck Said to the ground, placed his foot upon his chest, and would have plunged his sword into it had his sister not interposed. In his anger, he gave her a blow, which had her face bathed in blood. "Enemy of Allah!" sobbed Amina, "dost thou strike me thus for believing in the only true Allah? In spite of thee and thy violence, I will preserve the true faith". "Yes," she added with fervor, "there is no allah but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet; and now, Omar, finish thy work!"

Repenting his violence, Omar paused and took his foot away from the chest of Said. "Show me the writing," said he.

When the parchment containing the twentieth Sura [chapter] of the Quran was given to him, he read it, and it sank into his heart. Moved greatly, especially by the parts which dealt with resurrection and the judgment, he decided to embrace the religion of Islam without any delay.

Omar rushed to Orkham's house and, seeing Muhammad, expressed his desire to become a Muslim. Muhammad greeted him warmly and conducted him in the Muslim profession of faith i.e. the invocation of *Kalima Tayyaba*, recitation of which completes one's induction into the faith of Islam.

Omar was not content until his conversion was publicly announced. At his request, Muhammad accompanied him instantly to the Ka'aba, to perform openly the rites of Islam. Omar walked on the left hand and Hamza on the right to protect him [Muhammad] from injury or insult. It is said that about forty disciples accompanied the procession.

The story about Amina and Said having the Quran written on a parchment, and reading from it, is a concoction. In fact, during the time Muhammad was preaching Islam, the Arabs did not know that it [parchment] existed even in Egypt, where the Egyptians were known to have extensively used it for preserving their writings.

Muslims got the encouragement to fabricate the parchment's story from verse 6:7 of the Quran. In it, Muhammad hypothesized that even if he had the Quran written on a parchment, which the pagans could see and touch, even then they would not only have denied its divine nature, they would also have rejected it as "nothing but the obvious magic."

Unable to substantiate the content of the verse, one of the Muslim scholars has tried to explain it by claiming, "Qirtas, in the Apostle's life, could only mean "parchment," which was commonly used as writing materials in Western Asia from the 2nd century B.C. The word was derived from the Greek, Charles (Cf. Latin, "Charla"). Paper, as we know it, made from rags, was used by the Arabs after the conquest of Samarqand in 751 A. D. The Chinese had used it by the 2nd century B.C. The Arabs introduced it into Europe; it was used in Greece in the 11th and 12th century and in Spain through Sicily in the 12th century. The Papyrus, made from an Egyptian reed, was used in Egypt as early as 2,500 B.C. It gave place to paper in Egypt in the 10th century". (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, op.cit. vol.1, p. 290)

Because we hold the scholar's erudition in high esteem, we expected that, instead of giving us the paper's history, he would tell us how the Arabs came to have parchment when they did not have reed, and also, why they wrote down the revelations on skin, leaves and bones etc., when they, according to him, had access to this writing material.

The truth, perhaps, lies somewhere else. We suspect that Muhammad had seen the use of parchment in Syria during his business trips to that country, and impressed with its usage, he mentioned it to the pagans as a passing remark. Or, perhaps, the narrator added the word 'parchment' to the verse at the time the Quran was being compiled during Abu Bakr's regime.

Damascus in Syria was a modern city, and its populace highly literate, when Abu Bakr conquered it in 634 A.D. The Syrians were believed to have been among the first who invented the Arabic alphabets. The narrator of the verse must

have visited Damascus and seen the use of parchment there. While narrating to the scribe what Muhammad was supposed to have told his disciples about the pagan's attitude towards his revelations, he must have added the word "parchment" to the verse without realizing the fact that at the time Muhammad had made the statement, parchment was not in use among the pagans of Mecca.

Hamza and Omar's conversion to the new faith proved to be a milestone in the early history of Islam; for now Muhammad had the physical and moral support of two of the Quraishites' bravest and most powerful people. This also enabled him to go about his preaching more confidently than ever before. Omar's conversion to Islam is said to have caused so much of exasperation among the Quraish that Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, was forced to conclude that the pagans might make an attempt on his nephew's life, either by deception or through open violence. Therefore, the old man urged him and some of his disciples to withdraw to a house belonging to him, in the neighborhood of the city.

The protection thus given to Muhammad and his followers by Abu Talib, the head of the Hashimites, and by others of his line although differing from him in faith, drew on them the wrath of the rival branch of the Quraishites. This produced a schism that enmeshed the entire tribe. Abu Sofian, the head of the rival branch, availed himself of Muhammad's heresies to throw discredit, not merely upon such of his kindred as had embraced his faith, but upon the whole line of Hashim which - though dissenting from his doctrines - had protected him through mere clannish feelings. Abu Sofian did not oppose Muhammad and his uncle Abu Talib only out of personal

hatred or religious scruples, but also because of a family feud that related to the guardianship of the Ka'aba.

Part-6

BAN IMPOSED ON THE MUSLIMS

The custodianship of the Ka'aba, which generated the life-supporting revenues for its custodians and others affiliated with its functions had rested in the hands of the Hashimite clan for a long period of time. To perpetuate the practice, Abu Talib was desirous of transferring to his own line the honors of being the custodian of the Ka'aba, thus dismaying Abu Sofian and others interested in assuming the honors themselves. The last measure of Abu Talib, in providing Muhammad with a safe haven for refuge, was seized upon by Abu Sofian and his adherents as a pretext for a general ban of their rival line. They, accordingly, issued a decree, forbidding the rest of the tribe of Quraish from intermarrying or holding any intercourse, even commercial deals, with the Hashimites until they delivered up their kinsman, Muhammad, to be restrained from committing blasphemy against their ancestral gods and religion. This decree, which took place in the seventh year of what is called the mission of the Prophet, written on a parchment, was hung up on the wall of Ka'aba. Muslims claim that the ban had caused great difficulty to Muhammad and his followers. We do not know how the proclaimers of the ban implemented the decree, for, according to the Muslim assertion, they had failed to nab Muhammad when he walked away, before their eyes, out of his door in front of which, they were assembled with the intention of murdering him.

The short period of Muhammad's banishment rolled into the annual season of pilgrimage, when pilgrims flocked to

Mecca from all parts of Arabia to fulfill their religious obligations. During this sacred occasion, according to ancient law and its usage among the Arabs, all hostilities ceased, and warring tribes met in temporary peace to worship at the temple of Ka'aba. Utilizing the truce that this sacred occasion provided, Muhammad and his disciples ventured out of their shelter, and returned to Mecca.

While at large, Muhammad made full use of the opportunity that the pagan religious immunity afforded him. He mingled freely among the pilgrims - -preaching, praying, propounding his doctrines, and proclaiming his revelations. In this way, he made many converts who, on their return to their destinations, carried with them the seeds of the new faith. The Meccan pagans did not obstruct Muhammad in his mission, as they were bound to follow the sanctity of their religion. Muhammad, on the other hand, flaunted their religious dedication and violated the truce they expected him, as well, to honor. Instead, he went about unhindered, conspicuously propagating his divine faith among the visitors, who, it seems, had remained unaware of the volatile religious situation that was then obtaining in Mecca.

At end of the pilgrimage, Muhammad and his followers returned to their safe haven. The pagans are not known to have done anything either to prevent their return, or to cause them any hardships. On the contrary, the Meccan pagans, it seems, remained engaged with him, for a period of time, in endless arguments, which he followed with new revelations that denounced those who opposed him and his religion. The Quran, which contains, in Muhammad's own words, the exaggerated details of all the events that had unfolded during twenty-three years of his apostolic mission, does not give us

any indication that he was ever persecuted, in the real sense of the word, by his opponents. Nor, does it, for obvious reasons, have the details of how Muhammad must have treated his foes, especially in a situation where they were vehemently opposed to the spread of his religion among the Arabian population.

As the history of the time we are discussing here was tailored over a period of time after Muhammad's death, to favor the Muslims only, it is now impossible for us to know precisely the intrinsic beliefs of the idolaters. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the crudity of their statuary did not necessarily mean that they worshipped stones or trees, any more than the Christians worshipped plaster figures or painted canvasses depicting the saints. It seems probable that the pagans appreciated that the idols were merely symbolic of spiritual beings in the same way in that Muslims now venerate the edifice of Ka'aba as being the House of Allah, though He is believed not to remain confined to a structure of four walls.

Three years had passed since Muhammad and some of his followers took refuge in the safe haven provided by his uncle Abu Talib. During this period, he must have remained the target of his opponents' opprobrious language, but in spite of this, it seems, he continued to walk about the streets and sit, recite and argue in the public square, without ever having had to fear for his life.

In the meantime, the parchment, which contained the ban imposed on Muslims, was partly destroyed and nothing of the decree remained except the initial words, "In thy name, Oh Almighty Allah," the customary ancient formula with which the pagans began their writing. Muslims use this

formula today with a slight change brought about in it by Muhammad to fit a doctrine of his religion.

Under the circumstances, the decree was deemed annulled, whereupon Muhammad and his band of disciples were permitted to return to Mecca, unopposed and unhurt.

Pious Muslims consider the mysterious destruction of the decree as another miracle wrought by Allah to help Muhammad; unbelievers, on the contrary, contend that the mortal hands secretly defaced the document, which had become embarrassing to Abu Sofian due to its ineffectiveness.

In our earlier discussion on the use of parchment by the Arabs, we maintained that it was not possible for them to use it for the simple reason that it was not available to them at the relevant time. As to its alleged use for writing the decree of banishment, we hold the view that the pagans had not written the decree on a parchment; instead, they might have had hung up a piece of rag on the wall of the Ka'aba, it being symbolic of the message they wanted to convey to all those who were supposed to implement the ban.

In any event, Muhammad returned to Mecca and it coincided with the victories of the Persians over the Greeks, by which they conquered Syria and a part of Egypt. The idolatrous Quraishites exulted in the defeat of the Christian Greek, whose faith being opposed to the worship of idols; they associated it with the new faith of Islam. Muhammad, on the other hand, was disheartened by the Greeks' defeat but, nevertheless, he replied to the pagans' taunts and exultation by producing the thirtieth Sura [chapter] of the Quran, which opened with the following words: "*The Roman Empire has been defeated - In a land close by; But they (even) after, (This) defeat of theirs, Will soon be victorious - Within a few years*".

This prediction was verified and found to be true. Muslim theologians cite this as a proof that the Quran came down from heaven, and that Muhammad possessed the gift of prophecy. In reality, the whole prediction was no doubt a shrewd guess into futurity, aided by the knowledge of the actual events taking place contemporaneously around the Arabian Peninsula. The politicians and statesmen of our time make this kind of predictions almost on a daily basis, hence to claim what Muhammad had predicted about the Greeks as being a heavenly act, is nothing but an aspersion on his political and statesman-like astuteness.

Not long after Muhammad had returned to Mecca, his uncle Abu Talib, as a result of his old age, was facing death. This man, though supported and protected Muhammad from his infidel enemies, had not converted himself to the faith of his nephew. Many a time, the Muhammad implored him to accept his religion and to die a Muslim, but he always put him off, pleading that he could neither give up his ancestral religion, nor could he join in the exercise which his religion required its adherents to undertake; i.e. the act of placing their "backside above their heads," as the old man described the prostration, which he had seen his nephew performing three times a day.

Muhammad approached Abu Talib once again on his deathbed and beseeched him for the last time to accept the religion of Islam. He declined and breathed his last as an infidel. Abu Lahab, his brother, succeeded him as the head of the clan of Bani Hashim.

Scarcely a few days had passed from the death of the venerable Abu Talib, when Khadija, the dedicated and faithful wife of Muhammad, also took her leave from this

world. This happened in 619 A.D., when she was sixty-five years old.

Though Khadija was much older than Muhammad himself and past her bloom when women are desirable in the East, and though he was known to have an amorous temperament, yet he is said to have remained faithful to her and avoided taking additional wives, in spite of the fact that the Arabian laws permitted him to do so.

Pious Muslims point to this while highlighting his virtues. But an objective analysis of his relationship with Khadija does not support the aforesaid Muslim hypothesis.

It is true that so long as Khadija had lived, Muhammad had taken no additional wives, but it was not purely out of his love for her: it was rather dictated by his circumstances. He was, perhaps, fearful of his wife and apprehended her retaliation. He must have realized that if he took another wife while Khadija was still alive, she might react by depriving him of his sustenance. She might even divulge the secrets that revolved around his prophethood and divine mission, thereby destroying him along with his ambitions. Muhammad's conduct after Khadija's death lends credence to our hypothesis: there is no record that tells us that he felt deeply sad at the death of his wife and that he mourned it in the manner of an aggrieved husband.

Soon after Khadija's death, Muhammad sought to compensate himself by entering into multiple wedlocks, and taking a plurality of wives. He permitted, by his own law, four wives to each of his followers but did not limit himself to that number, reasoning that a prophet, being gifted with enormous manly prowess and special privileges, was not bound to restrict himself to the same laws as those of the

ordinary mortals. Of his numerous marriages and wives, we shall speak later in a separate chapter.

VISIT TO TAIF

Muhammad soon realized the irreparable loss that he sustained in the death of his uncle and protector, Abu Talib. After his death, he found no one who could check and react against the hostilities of his inveterate foes Abu Sufian and Abu Jahl, who are alleged to have soon stirred up such a spirit of opposition that he deemed it unsafe to continue living in his native town. He set out, therefore, accompanied by his freed slave Zaid, immediately after the death of his uncle and wife, to seek refuge in Taif, a small walled town some seventy miles from Mecca, inhabited by Arabs of the tribe of Thaqif. It was one of the favored places of Arabia, situated among vineyards and gardens. Here grew peaches and plums, melons and pomegranates; figs, blue and green; and the palm trees with their clusters of green and golden fruit. So fresh were its pastures and fruitful its fields, contrasted with the sterility of the desserts, that the Arabs fabled it to have originally been a part of Syria, which had broken off and floated to the site at the time of Noah's deluge.

Muhammad entered Taif hoping to procure some degree of protection on account of the influence that his uncle al Abbas was supposed to have wielded by virtue of his possessions there. But he was totally wrong in selecting Taif as a place of refuge; for it was a stronghold of idolatry and its inhabitants maintained in full force the worship of al Lat; they believed it to be one of the three daughters of Allah.

He remained in Taif for about a month, seeking in vain to convert its inhabitants to Islam. When he tried to preach his doctrines, his voice was muffled by ribald remarks. On many

an occasion, stones were thrown at him, which the faithful Zaid warded off. So violent did the popular fury become that he was finally driven out of the city, and even pursued for some distance by an insulting rabble of slaves and urchins. Surprisingly, Allah had given Muhammad no revelation prior to his arrival, forewarning the hostility that he was destined to encounter during his futile visit to the city of Taif.

The visit to Taif may have proved disastrous for Muhammad insofar as his mission for conversion and protection was concerned, but in actuality the sight of the city had immensely benefited him. It enabled him to conceive the layout of the celestial Paradise and to describe it in the Quran, filled with all amenities he had seen in the city. He also had this Paradise peopled with black-eyed virgin houris to be had as consorts by those men who entered it after being judged by Allah on the Day of Resurrection, a licentious temptation that had induced many pagans to embrace Islam, in spite of their being opposed to it in the beginning. However, driven out so ignominiously from the place where he hoped to obtain refuge, Muhammad dared not return to Mecca, fearing persecution at the hands of his enemies. He, therefore, decided to remain in the desert until Zaid found him asylum with his friends in the city. In this extremity, he had one of those visions, which always seem to have appeared in his lonely and agitated moments.

He had halted in a solitary place in the valley of Nakhla, which was situated between Mecca and Taif. Here, while he was reading from his compositions to overcome the feeling of loneliness, he was overheard by a passing group of spirits, known forever as *Jinns* to the Arabs. They are the beings supposed to have been made of fire, some good, others evil,

and liable to judgment on Dooms Day together with men. They are invisible, and maintain residences at isolate places as well as within the proximity of human habitations. They produce children. They also had apostles, like the ones mankind had been having from Adam to the time of Muhammad. Pious Jinns shall be awarded Paradise where they would enjoy felicities at par with the humans, while the evil ones shall be consigned to hell where they shall burn for eternity. The Jinns, made of fire, would be neutralized in order for the hell's fire to have its burning effect on their bodies. The group of the passing Jinns paused and listened to what Muhammad was reading. "Verily," they said at its conclusions, *"we have heard an admirable discourse, which directeth us unto the right institution; wherefore we believe therein."* Their confession to his religion consoled Muhammad, proving that though men might ridicule him and his doctrines, they were held in high reverence by spiritual intelligence. At least we may infer as much from what has been mentioned about the Jinns in the forty-sixth and seventy-second Suras of the Quran.

From that moment onward, Muhammad declared himself to be the one, sent by Allah, for the conversion of the Jinns, as well as of the human race, to Islam. Interestingly, science and human logic do not recognize Jinns and deny their existence, in any form, on earth.

THE ASCENSION TO SEVENTH HEAVEN

Muhammad, through the good offices of his freed slave Zaid, having been granted asylum by Mutim Ibn Idi, chief of the Nofal clan of the Quraish, returned one evening to Mecca. The following day, Mutim with his sons and nephews went fully armed to the public square of the Kaba and announced

that Muhammad was henceforth under their protection. Muhammad was delighted, but it seems that at this crucial juncture of his mission, he refrained from preaching and persuasively converting the members of the Quraish pagans to his religion. Instead, he used his time and energy in attempting to convert those tribesmen who visited Mecca from time to time, as well as those nomads whom he could reach without being impeded by his enemies.

During this period when Muhammad was maintaining a low profile in Mecca, it is said, he, for an unexplained reason, was sleeping one night of the year 620 A.D., in the house of his cousin, Umm Hani. She was a widow whose husband had died when the couple was living in Abyssinia. In the dead of the night, angel Gabriel came to him and "spurred him with his foot" (Martin Lings, op. cit. p. 101). Thus awakened, he was instantly transported to Jerusalem by means of the "winged horse with a woman's face and peacock's tail," called the *Buraq*. While there, Muhammad tied up the *Buraq* to a post and thence led all the prophets of bygone days, including Adam, in a prayer at the holy temple known as the "*Dome of the Rock*." Some Moslem commentators, however, say that the temple in question remained in ruins from the fortieth year of Christ's ascension to heaven till the time of Caliph Omar (634-44), who had restored it to its original shape during his reign. How Omar retrieved the original design of the edifice, however, remains to us an unsolved enigma.

On the issue of morality, critics question the purpose of Muhammad's presence, at dead of night, in the house of a widowed woman who was living alone, as well as God's decision for inviting him to heaven from the widow's house, instead of his own.

We believe that Muhammad had invented the story of *Miraj* [journey to heaven] to hide his presence in Umm Hani's house. In spite of being a polytheistic society, the Meccans honored their dead, and refrained from doing things for some time that would cause pain to the departed souls. Having illicit sex was one of the forbidden things. Muhammad failed to live by that standard, and immediately after Khadija's death, he sought to satisfy his sexual needs by engaging himself with Umm Hani.

The following morning, people wanted to know about his whereabouts the night before. Not being in a position to disclose the fact that he spent the night at his paramour's house, he told the questioners that he had been on a trip of the celestial world. As the trip involved no other human beings, nor were any humans expected to exist in the celestial world, to witness his arrival and departure, it prevented the questioners from demanding eyewitnesses to prove his claim, thus extracting him from a quagmire that could have destroyed, forever, not only him, but also his apostolic career.

The prayer over, angel Gabriel opened up Muhammad's heart for the second time and, cleansing it of all sins that had accumulated in it from the time of the first cleansing performed when he was five years old, the angel replaced the heart back in his chest. Thereafter, a ladder was installed, connecting the site of the Dome with all the seven heavens in the sky. He climbed, one after another, through all the seven heavens. In the course of his tour, Muhammad was shown the Paradise as well as the Hell. He saw more women than men burning in its fire. *Al Aqsa*, as the Dome is also referred to, thus became one of the three holiest places of Islam, because,

as Muslims insist, Muhammad had ascended to the throne of God from its vicinity.

During his celestial visit, Muhammad is said to have had an audience with God, and held confidential parleys with him. In the course of this audience, commentators say, God charged Muhammad and his followers with the mandate of saying prayers fifty times a day, which was subsequently reduced to five on Muhammad's repeated representations. These daily five prayers eventually became a central part of the Islamic practice. The Quran, which is supposed to contain all the essential doctrines of the faith, however, does not specifically say that Muhammad had corporeally ascended to heavens and spoken to God. This is because, some say, he withheld parts of the episode from his followers for personal reasons, thus giving the impression that the Quran, as a whole, may be containing only as much material as Muhammad, in his discretion, had chosen to divulge to his followers.

As far as the daily five prayers are concerned, the Quran does not explicitly mention these prayers, **nor is there hard evidence that Muhammad himself prayed five times a day during his lifetime.** Rather, what the Quran mentions, though not clearly, are the three daily prayers: one to be said in the morning, the second in the evening and the third during the night. Neither are the specifics of prostration described; all that the Quran requires of the Muslims is a simple inflection, followed by prostration in their prayers. **Nor does the Quran require them to recite anything during their prayers.**

Furthermore, **the Quran does not mention anything about Muslims being circumcised; nor is it known that Muhammad had ever had this procedure done on his person, though it is**

obligatory for Muslim parents to have their male children circumcised in their childhood.

Concerning Muhammad's *Miraj* or Ascension to the heaven, many historians of repute contest the commonly held doctrine of his physical ascension to the seventh heaven. One of them is Fazlur Rahman, who says that the "spiritual experiences of the Prophet were later woven by tradition, especially when an 'orthodoxy' began to take shape, into the doctrine of a single, physical, locomotive experience of the 'Ascension' of Muhammad to Heaven, and still later were supplied all the graphic details about the animal which was ridden by the Prophet during his ascension, about his sojourn in each of the seven heavens, and his parleys with the Prophets of bygone ages from Adam up to Jesus." (Rahman has not mentioned prophet Idris, who is believed to have entered one of the seven heavens surreptitiously and taken residence in it by hoodwinking Gabriel, his best friend). He concludes by saying that "the doctrine of a locomotive *Miraj* or Ascension developed by the orthodox (chiefly on the pattern of the Ascension of Jesus) and backed by Hadith is no more than a historical fiction whose materials come from various sources."

What Rahman really implies is that Muhammad did not physically ascend to heavens; that he did not have an audience with God and, consequently, he and his followers were not mandated to say any prayers.

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, a respected scholar of Islam, appears to agree with Rahman's position. Consequently, he has not mentioned anything in his works on the Quran (see *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*) about the mysterious *Miraj*; this despite the fact that Muslims consider

the putative journey to be an essential component of their faith.

Part - 7

Al-HEGIRA-THE FLIGHT TO MADINA

The oasis of Yathrib, now called 'al-Madina,' i.e. 'the city of the Prophet,' is located some two hundred and fifty miles north of Mecca on the ancient caravan route that connected Mecca with Syria. In old times, Meccan Arabs used to travel to this distant land to sell what they had in their land and to buy all of the essential commodities they found in Syria.

The settlements of Yathrib differed fundamentally from the township of Mecca. The latter possessed only a few shallow wells in a dry watercourse; the water was frequently insufficient even for drinking purposes. It possessed no vegetation, and agriculture was impossible. This little settlement, enclosed by bare, rocky mountains, shimmered beneath a scorching sun. There was nothing in Mecca to live on; its people earned their bread by servicing pilgrims who came to Mecca to pay homage to their idol gods. Others were compelled to seek their livelihood elsewhere, by trade to the Yemen, Egypt, Syria and Persia. Mecca was the base, from which all caravans set out on their long journeys, and to which they returned with precious commodities, including foodstuff that they procured in those distant lands.

The economic condition of Yathrib was entirely different. An ample supply of water and a wide valley between the mountains gave full scope to agriculture. The whole valley was pleasantly verdant with crops with well-planted gardens of date palms.

The inhabitants of the Yathrib oasis lived principally on agriculture, and on a limited number of domestic animals. The population maintained its tribal character. Each small tribe owned its own area of cultivation, in the center of which it had built a fortified village. The valley, therefore, appeared green and refreshing, dotted here and there with small villages, which presented a peaceful and serene scene.

In the era we are writing about here, five small tribes inhabited Yathrib, with the members of each tribe being, perhaps, very small. Three of those tribes, known as Bani Qainuqa, Bani Nadheer and Bani Quraidha, professed the Jewish faith. No record exists to tell us whether those people were the descendants of the tribe of Judah from Jerusalem, or whether they were ethnically Arabs who had been converted to Judaism, as were the Jews of the Yemen.

Those Jews outwardly resembled the Arabs and spoke Arabic like their other contemporaries. Practicing a relatively enlightened religion, the judaistic tribes worked as artisans in various crafts and were much richer than their pagan neighbors. They were also moneylenders, a business with which they are identified even today.

The Jewish tribes had schools, where *rabbis* gave lessons on Torah and other Jewish Scriptures. Presumably all or nearly all of their men were able to read and write. Those Jews also believed and preached the coming of a redeemer in a very foreseeable future. They were, as such, mentally prepared to welcome him, when he appeared in their midst.

The other tribes of the Yathrib were the Aus and the Khazraj, who practiced the popular paganism of Arabia. As required by their religion, they sent large convoys of

worshippers every year on pilgrimage to Kaba - the shrine of idols in Mecca.

The Aus and Khazraj tribes were generally poor. They borrowed money from their Jewish neighbors and remained heavily indebted to them most of the time. It is said that only one set of bridal clothing and ornaments existed in the whole oasis. When a pagan girl was to be married, the necessary finery had to be rented from a Jew. Because of their economic affluence and superiority, the Jews were not much liked by their poor pagan debtors. For the same reason, Muhammad, after living among them for some time, had developed a severe dislike for them. The extent of his animosity toward the Jews is described in the Quran. Through it, he prohibited payment of interest on loans in order to punish the Jews, and to provide relief to his poor and indebted converts.

Possibly in 616 A.D., a member of the Aus tribe gave his protection to a Bedouin who was then visiting the oasis. In retaliation, a member of the Khazraj tribe paid a Jew to smack the face of the Bedouin. His protector took steps to defend his protégé and killed the Jew who had, in the meantime, struck the Bedouin. The Khazrajites, failing to nab the Jew's killer, killed, instead, another man of the Ausite; thus giving birth to a bloody feud that was destined to last for as long as it was necessary for both tribes to avenge the deaths. Consequently, a series of battles took place between the Aus and Khazraj, culminating in the victory of the Aus over its enemy after a long period of time.

Because of the circumstances described, life in Yathrib continued to be precarious, for all the warring tribes lived quite close to each other. In the battles that ensued between the Aus and Khazraj, the chief of the latter tribe, Abdullah Ibn

Ubay, held moderate views and a peaceful temperament. He not only had refused to take part in the feud; he also used all his efforts to end the fratricidal strife between the warring factions. Of him, we shall eventually learn more as our narrative progresses.

A distant away from Yathrib, Muhammad, deprived of the benefaction of his wife Khadija and the protection of his uncle Abu Talib, was finding his fortunes, in his native land, dwindling to the bottom. He was finding himself constrained in all aspects of his life. He was feeling frustrated with the pace of conversions among the Meccan infidels, a reality that convinced him that the pagans were never going to accept his religion. The debacle of Taif reminded him how difficult it would be for him to walk into a city, and seek help.

Deciding that to continue his mission with the Meccans would bear him no fruits, he discontinued his preaching in Mecca. Instead, he started paying attention, for quite a while, to those nomadic tribesmen and strangers who visited Mecca on pilgrimage or on trade. Eventually, this diversion also proved to be unsatisfactory, for, in spite of his best efforts, he had failed to elicit positive responses from those pilgrims whom he approached for quite some time. He was in a dilemma, knowing not what would be the result of his next step. The more he thought about his predicaments, the more constrained he felt. After a lot of thoughts, he concluded that he needed to find a place whose inhabitants were willing to receive him as an honored guest and bestow on him the privileges that would allow him to propagate his faith without any obstruction. Abyssinia, in this context, was out of question, because it was a pre-dominantly Christian country.

He aspired for a different place. In order to let his desire come true, he decided to wait.

It was, perhaps, in the year 620 A.D. that Muhammad noticed the arrival of some pilgrims from Yathrib and took the opportunity to engage them in a conversation. A group of seven or eight persons belonging to both the tribes of Aus and Khazraj was impressed by what he had told it about the Oneness of God and the futility of paganism. The Khazrajites thought he was the same Messiah whom the Jews of Yathrib were expecting, while others considered the possibility of using him as a mediator or peacemaker in their volatile oasis. Both groups of those people were, however, of the identical impression that they should use the man and his abilities to further their neglected causes. They returned to Yathrib, exploring and debating all possibilities.

The following year, a group of twelve men, including those of the previous year, came back to Mecca to perform their hajj. Muhammad met them in a little valley of the mountains and read them some of the verses he told them he received from God. All the twelve Yathribis declared themselves convinced, and made a final profession of faith. Since the converts were the most influential among the members of an otherwise powerful tribe, Muhammad sought their protection and proposed to accompany them on their return. The converts informed him of their deadly feud with the tribe of Aus, and asked him to defer his arrival in Yathrib to a time that would suite him and his hosts. They, however, suggested that he send a man along with them to instruct and strengthen the faith of those Yathribis who, under their influence, had converted to Islam a year ago. Muhammad agreed and sent Musab Ibn Omar, one of the most learned

and able of his disciples, not only to teach the neo-Muslims the tenets of Islam, but also to propagate it among other Yathribis, who practiced paganism, Judaism and Christianity. In this way, the seed of Islam began to sprout in the oasis of Yathrib.

Musab Ibn Omar often faced threats to his life, yet he persisted in his preaching. His tenacity paid off and he succeeded in converting some of the city's principal inhabitants. Among them were Saad Ibn Maad, a chief of the Ausites, and Osaid Ibn Hedheir, a man of great authority. During this period of time, some Muslims of Mecca, driven out by the pagan harassment and hunger, also arrived and took refuge in Yathrib. They joined Musab and helped him in taking the propaganda of Islam to the footsteps of almost all inhabitants of Yathrib. A large number of the city's inhabitants saw their economic emancipation in Islam and felt inclined to embrace its doctrines for their own good. Thus, in a short period of two years, those people achieved in Yathrib what Muhammad, in Mecca, could not achieve over a period of almost thirteen years.

Muhammad as well as those who promised him sanctuary had been keeping a watchful eye on the changing situation of the city. When they felt confident of giving Muhammad shelter, more than seventy of them, led by Musab Ibn Omar, accompanied the hajj delegation to Mecca in the holy month of 622 A.D. for the purpose of inviting Muhammad to take up his residence in Yathrib.

To keep the matter confidential, the emissaries from Yathrib arranged a midnight meeting with Muhammad in the company of his uncle al-Abbas. They met on the hill of Aqaba, where they pledged to support Muhammad upon his

migration to their city. This pledge is known as the *Pledge of Aqaba* or the "*Pledge of Women*" because it involved a promise of loyalty, but no obligation to fight.

Other terms of the pledge included a promise on the part of the Yathribis to abjure idolatry and to worship the one true God, openly and fearlessly. To safeguard himself, Muhammad exacted unflinching obedience in weal or woe; and for those of the disciples who might accompany him, protection. All terms decided, he committed himself to take up residence in their midst and to remain with them, to be friends of their friends, and the enemy of their enemies. "But, should we perish in your cause," they asked, "what will be our reward?" "Paradise!" Muhammad assured them.

After concluding the agreement as aforesaid, the emissaries placed their hands in the hands of Muhammad and swore to abide by the compact. He then singled out twelve persons from among them and designated them as his apostles, following, we suppose, the example of Jesus Christ. But as the allegiance was being sworn, they heard a voice coming from the summit of the hill, which not only denounced them as apostates; it also threatened them with punishment. In the darkness and the solitude of the night, the voice appeared awesome to the emissaries and they blanched. "It is the voice of the fiend Iblis," said Muhammad scornfully. "He is the foe of God: fear him not."

In reality, it was the voice of a Quraishite spy; for, the very next morning, they exhibited knowledge of what had transpired between Muhammad and the Yathribis emissaries during the night and threatened the new confederates with great harshness as they departed from the city. The holiness of the month had restrained the Quraishites from becoming

violent; otherwise the Yathribis would have suffered great harm to their persons.

After the departure of the Yathribis and soon after the expiration of the holy month, the pagans revived their opposition of Muhammad and his religious doctrines with an increased vitality. Sensing a crisis at hand and being resolved to leave the city himself, he ordered his adherents to leave Mecca and to proceed to Yathrib in order to avoid being broiled into unproductive arguments with their enemies.

They heeded the order and took to Yathrib. In a short time, the pagans discovered that the whole Muslim colony of Mecca had disappeared, leaving the streets barren. The Yathribis, henceforth known as *Ansars* or *Helpers*, received the immigrants, whom they called *Muhajirs*, with love and sympathy and shared with them all that that they had. Some of the Ansars even gave away their additional wives to their brethren from Mecca in order to mitigate their sexual deprivation. Muhammad recognized his hosts' spirit and great sacrifices. To compensate for what they had done for the Muhajirs, he gave the Ansars, upon his arrival in Yathrib, the assurance of receiving great rewards from him as well as from God.

By the time the aforesaid exodus took place, Abu Sofian had become the ruler of Mecca. When the disquieting news reached him, he summoned a meeting of the city council to decide on the course of action, which the Meccans thought they should take to tackle a situation that was likely to be created by the mass migration of the Muslims to Yathrib. They recognized that the situation was grave and that they were likely to face serious challenges from them in near future. They realized that the fugitive Muslims were going to

bind themselves into a strong community in Yathrib and that they would be doing anything and everything, to the detriment of the Meccans' interests, to support their lives. They also realized the inevitable: Muslims would intercept their caravans which needed to pass through Yathrib while en route to, or returning from Syria, not only to plunder them, but also to disrupt the trade that supported all of the Meccans' lives. They, therefore, needed to take preventive measures to safeguard their lives and properties.

The council held a meeting, with its members' opinions remaining divided. Finally, Abu Sofian declared that the only effectual check on the growing evil was to prevent Muhammad from leaving Mecca at all costs. Suggested preventive measures included his confinement, or death, if the first measure failed. To implement the decision, a representative from each Meccan tribe was selected with the understanding that should it become necessary, each one of them would plunge their swords into Muhammad's body, if he resisted the confinement. This arrangement was necessary in order to avoid tribal vengeance that normally followed a death at the hand of a man from another tribe.

Someone, however, tipped off Muhammad on the decision that Abu Sofian and his council had made. He decided to elude the Meccans with the help of Ali, before they could lay their hands on his person.

The pagan's group charged with apprehending Muhammad arrived at the door of his house. Through a crevice, they saw him wrapped in a mantle and sleeping on his bed. The would-be apprehenders paused at the door for a while and then rushed toward the sleeping person. The sleeper got up but, instead of Muhammad, it was Ali who

stood before them. Puzzled, they realized that Muhammad had escaped from his house before they could arrive. His escape enraged them so bad that the Quraishites felt no hesitation in declaring a reward of one hundred camels to anyone who brought him to them, dead or alive.

We hear diverse accounts of Muhammad's mode of escape from the house after faithful Ali had wrapped himself in the would-be victim's mantle, and taken his place on the bed. A miraculous account has it that Muhammad opened the door of his house silently and threw a handful of dust in the air, casting such blindness upon his enemies that he walked away through their midst without being perceived. The erudite view on the episode, however, is that he clambered over the rear wall of the house with the help of a slave who lent him his back to step upon, thereby enabling him to negotiate the height of the wall for his escape.

Having escaped apprehension or murder, Muhammad immediately went to the house of Abu Bakr and they arranged an instant flight. They decided that they should take refuge in a cave of Mount Thor, about an hour's distance from Mecca, and wait there until they could proceed safely to Yathrib. In the meantime, the children of Abu Bakr would secretly bring them food and water. In keeping with the decision, they left Mecca while it was dark and reached the foot of Mount Thor by daybreak. Hardly were they inside the cave when they heard the sound of pursuit. Abu Bakr quacked with fear, but Muhammad pacified him with the assurance of God's help.

Here, a miracle is supposed to have taken place, which is dear to the hearts of all true believers. By the time, Muslims believe, the pursuing Quraishites reached the mouth of the

cavern, an acacia tree had sprung up before it. In its spreading branches, a pigeon had woven its nest and laid eggs. Over the mouth of the cave, a spider spread its web. When the pursuers saw those signs of undisturbed peace, they concluded that no one could have entered the cavern and they turned away from it in another direction in search of the fugitive. This, Muslims say, was a manner in which God saved the lives of Muhammad and his companion Abu Bakr from their enemies. In like-wise manner, Muslims insist, God saves the life of all true believers!

In reality, the so-called miracle was conjured up by the later-day Muslims to bolster Muhammad's credibility at the expense of his enemies. A man, who was about to emerge a deceiver and a murderer, could not possibly have the power to cause miracles; it would, however, be a different matter if he used illusion to deceive his friends and victims in order to enhance his apostolic image that he made use of to achieve some of his sinister designs.

The fugitives remained for three days undiscovered in the cave while Asama, one of the daughters of Abu Bakr, brought them food and water every day from her house. On the fourth day, they set out for Yathrib on camels brought to them by a servant of Abu Bakr. Their journey remained generally undisturbed till they reached Quba, about two miles from their final destination. Quba was a favorite resort for the inhabitants of the city, and a place to which they sent their sick and infirm, for the air here was pure and salubrious. On arrival here, Al Qaswa - Muhammad's camel - crouched on her knees and refused to go farther. He interpreted this as being a good omen and decided to halt there for some time and prepare for entering the city. He remained at this place

for four days, residing in the house of an Ausite named Kulthum Ibn Hathem. Salman al Parsi, a renowned Persian proselyte who, in later years, rose to power and great fame, joined Muhammad here.

Salman al Parsi was a Persian, and professed the faith of Zoroastrianism. He was well versed with the doctrines of his religion. After Persia's victory over the Romans, he traveled to Medina. Told of Muhammad's impending arrival, he developed a curiosity to meet him before he returned to his homeland. In the first meeting, he impressed Muhammad, who asked him to stay on in Medina so that he could consult him on Zoroastrian faith and its principles. Hoping to earn fame and a better living for himself, he agreed, and after converting to Islam, spent the rest of his life in Medina.

While incorporating various Judaistic doctrines and dogmas into Islam, Muhammad consulted Salman to find out if his religion had anything that he could make part of his new faith. Salman told him all about Zoroastrianism, including the details of a debate that had supposedly taken place, in 6th B.C., between Zoroaster Spitama, the founder of Zoroastrianism, and King Kavi Vishtaspa, who ruled Bactria and lived in Balkh, followed by his interrogation by his court's Wise Men, Priests and Magicians. He narrated:

Declaring himself the Prophet of the One Wise Lord, Zoroaster asked the King to turn his heart from vain and evil idols towards the glory of the True and Wise and Eternal Lord.

"What sign have you to offer that your words are true?" the King asked.

"I teach the word of Truth against the word of Falsehood. If you or your wise men wish to question me, I shall answer

and prove ways of idol-worship to be wrong and shadowed with the darkness of night; and the way of the One Wise Lord, *Ahura Mazda*, to be good and bright as the light of the day," answered the Prophet.

"Wise men, Priests, and Magicians!" the King addressed his men, "question this stranger on his teachings, and I shall sit in judgment and decide who is right and who is wrong!"

"If you find my words to be true," said Zoroaster to the King, "promise that you will abandon the dark ways of idol-worship and follow the shining road of the Wise Lord."

"I promise!" said the King.

Then the debate between Zoroaster and the King's Wise Men, Priests and Magicians began.

"What is this new religion that you teach, and how is it different from the religion of your forefathers?" the Chief Priest asked Zoroaster angrily.

"I have come not to teach a new religion, but to improve the old," Zoroaster replied. "What I teach is the Truth of the Creator, and therefore good. Your Idol-worship is not true, and therefore it is evil."

"Do you mean that our gods, the Sun, the Fire, the Mountains, and the Stars are false gods?" the Chief Priest asked.

"No," Zoroaster replied, "they are not false gods. They are not gods at all. If a man makes a house, would you call the house the man? Even so the sun, moon and mountains are not gods, but the works of the Creator."

"Who is that Creator?" one of the magicians asked.

"Ahura Mazda, Lord of Wisdom, Supreme Ruler of the World!" Zoroaster replied.

"And you say that he created everything in the world?" one of the Wise Men asked.

"He created everything that is good in the world. For God is Good."

"And who created the evil of the world?"

"Angra Manyu, the Evil Spirit, created all that is evil in the world," replied Zoroaster.

"Then there is more than one god in the world!" the Chief Priest shouted triumphantly.

"Yes," Zoroaster replied. "There are two Creators. In the beginning there were two spirits: one Good and one evil. And the Good Spirit said to the Evil Spirit, 'Your ways are not my ways, your thoughts are not my thoughts, your words are not my words, and your deeds are not my deeds. Let us separate!' Then the Good Spirit created all the good in the world, and the Evil Spirit made all the evil in the world."

"Then why do you say we should follow the Good Spirit? Why not follow the Evil Spirit who is just as great as the Good Spirit?" the Wise Man asked again.

"Because Good will win over Evil in the end."

"How do you know that?" a magician asked.

"Because Evil has no foresight!" Zoroaster replied slowly. "The Wise Lord remembers the past and understands the future. But the Evil spirit does not know the past nor the future. Evil lives only for the profits of the present. That is why the Wise One will win the battle over Evil in the end."

"And who created Man?" a wise man asked.

"Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, created man," Zoroaster replied.

"You said that the Good Spirit can do only good and create only good things. Then how is it that Man, created by the Good Spirit, is following the ways of the Evil Spirit?"

"That is because Man was created with the free will to choose between good and evil," Zoroaster replied. "But all the thoughts a man thinks and all the words a man speaks and all the deeds a man does each day of his life are written down in the Book of life. The good thoughts, words and deeds are written down on one side, and the bad thoughts, words and deeds are written down on the other side. When a man dies, his soul comes up to the Keeper of the Book of Life. If his good thoughts, words and deeds are greater than his evil thoughts, words and deeds, then the soul goes to Heaven. Otherwise the soul must go down to the tortures of Hell."

"And will this go on forever?" the King asked.

"No, Your Majesty!" Zoroaster replied. "For the Day of Judgment is nigh. And on that Day of Days the Wise Lord will triumph over the Evil Spirits. Good will triumph over Evil. Then all dead will come to life again. The good souls and the bad souls will be tried. They will pass through a flow of molten metal. To the good it will seem like passing through warm milk. But the evil will burn everlastingly. And then the God Lord will banish the Evil Spirit and keep them there forever. And on that Day of Days the good and happy world without evil will begin and last forever!"

All the men in the throne-room were silent, for they had never heard such strange words before. And the King asked the men:

"Have you no other questions to ask this man?"

"What ought one to do to follow the ways of the Wise Lord?" asked one wise man.

"Humata, Hakkata, Hvarshta! Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds!" This is the Way to the Wise Lord!" (For the dialogue, see Joseph Gaer's *How the Great Religions Began*, pp. 219 to 223)

Salman's learned discourse brought back to Muhammad's mind what he had learned from Waraqa ibn Nofal and Monk Adas before the commencement of his mission. Deeply impressed, he contemplated seriously on Zoroaster's concepts of Free Will, Judgment Day and Resurrection etc. Finding them as effective tools for threatening the pagans with the unknown future, he incorporated those concepts into what he claimed were teachings from God, having come to him, through angel Gabriel, in the form of revelations. His plan yielded great results; the extreme fear of being punished on the Day of Judgment not only influenced the great majority of the polytheists to convert to Islam, its influence, even today, rules the minds of all Muslims who, after reading the Quran, can be observed seeking, against those threats, immediate refuge in Al-Mighty God's kindness and generosity.

It is our considered opinion that had Muhammad not used the threat of punishment in the world hereafter to wear the resistance of the gullible pagans down, his mission would not have achieved as much success as it did during his own lifetime, nor our world would have as many Muslims as it has today.

The Muslims of Mecca, who had arrived and taken refuge some time before in Yathrib, hearing that Muhammad was at Quba, came out to meet him there. The Ansars, who had

made their compact with him in the preceding year, also came forward to greet him and to renew their pledge of fidelity.

Having obtained from his converts a confirmed report of the Yathribis' favorable disposition towards him, Muhammad entered Yathrib on Friday, the twenty-second of September in the Christian era of 622 [22-9-622, Friday]. From the time Muhammad entered Yathrib, his disciples renamed it as *Madinat al Nabi*, the city of the Prophet, abbreviated to Madina, a name by which we shall refer to it in future.

On entering the city, and to his pleasant surprise, Muhammad found himself at the head of a numerous and powerful sect, composed partly of the seventy of his disciples who had fled Mecca before him and partly of the inhabitants of the place who were converted to Islam by Muhammad, as well as by the Meccan immigrants who lived in their midst for some time. Most of the local proselytes belonged to the tribes of Ausites and Khazrajites. They were the descendents of two brothers, al Aus and al Khazraj.

In spite of having the same blood flowing through their veins, those two tribes had disrupted Madina by their inveterate and mortal feuds, until the time they became united in the bonds of their new faith. With those tribes whose members had not yet converted to his faith, Muhammad made the covenants of co-existence. And it was this unity between the two formerly warring tribes and the pact of co-existence with those tribes who were expected to cause him trouble that had provided Muhammad with the much sought-after strength, which he lacked in Mecca.

Contrary to what is generally believed to have helped Muhammad in setting himself as the ruler of Madina, we are of the view that it was the unity of the two pagan tribes,

brought about through the lure of Islam, and his political sagacity that had helped him in achieving all of his later-day successes. If he had failed to achieve either of those elements in Madina, we believe, Muhammad would have faced the same fate here as he did in Mecca during the entire length of his apostolic career there. His failure in Madina would have strangled Islam forever.

Prior to Muhammad's migration to Madina, the tribe of Khazraj was very much under the sway of their chief named Abdullah Ibn Ubay, whom we have briefly mentioned earlier. He was about to be crowned the king (Ibn Ishaq, op. cit, p. 278) when the arrival of Muhammad in Madina and the excitement caused by his doctrines gave the popular sentiment a twist, which shattered his dream of becoming a ruler into pieces. Whatever little we know of him now tells us that Abdullah was a stately person, possessing a graceful demeanor with a ready and eloquent tongue. He was a man who had many qualities of a good politician. He also knew how to disguise his displeasure and sentiments. In keeping with his political shrewdness, he exhibited the profession of a great friendship for Muhammad and attended many of his meetings along with many of his companions. Covertly, Muslims claim, Abdullah harbored a grudge against him on account of his ascension to power having been disrupted by the latter's arrival in Madina. Still he maintained a pleasant relationship with his nemesis who, being captivated by his personal appearance, plausible conversation and his apparent deference to him, did not, at first, suspect any abnormality in their social intercourse. But as time passed, and the frequency of their encounters increased, Muhammad found out that Abdullah was not only jealous of his popularity, he also cherished a secret animosity against him. He also found out

that Abdullah's companions were equally false in their pretended friendship towards him; hence he stamped them with the name of "*The Hypocrites*," an appellation under which he delivered a whole Sura for the benefit of his followers. In spite of his supposedly dubious nature, however, Abdullah Ubay is not known to have caused Muhammad any serious problems, the stories of his alleged betrayal notwithstanding.

Part - 8

Having settled down in Madina, Muhammad, first of all, decided to erect a mosque. He selected a site shaded by date trees for this purpose. He chose this location because he is said to have been guided there by his camel. In order to build the mosque, he had the buried bodies removed, and the trees, standing on the site, cut down. Because the climate of Madina itself was mild hot and rain infrequent, Muhammad decided to build his mosque on the pattern of the dwellings, then existing in the city from the time the Arabs learned to live in homes.

When completed, the mosque turned out to be a simple structure, suited to the religion that Muhammad preached then in Mecca, and to the scanty and precarious means of its votaries. Its walls were built of mud daubed on to wattle; the trunks of the recently felled palm trees served as pillars to support the roof, which was made of their branches, and thatched with their leaves. It had three openings: one to the south, where the *Qibla* (the direction faced by Muslims while saying their prayers) was afterward established; another called the gate of Gabriel (through which the angel entered the mosque without being seen by human eyes); and third the gate of Mercy. A part of the mosque was set aside for the

habitation of those of his disciples who had no home of their own.

Next to the mosque Muhammad built his living quarters, using the same materials with which he fashioned the mosque itself. Since timber was not available to the Arabs at the time, no cabins of Muhammad's Quarter had any doors. They merely had strips of sacking hung up to screen their entrance. In those cabins once lived at least nine of Muhammad's wives, and an unknown number of slave girls.

This mosque is known as *Masjidul Nabi* (the Mosque of the Prophet) because Muhammad himself had founded and built it, and also for the reason that in its grounds are buried his remains. After the mosque was constructed, Muhammad found himself at a loss for some time, not knowing how he should summon his followers to the mosque to perform their prayers: whether with the sound of trumpets as among the Jews, or by lighting fires, which was a very difficult task, on higher grounds, or by the beating of timbrels. While in the midst of this perplexity, Abdullah - the son of Zaid - a freed slave whose wife Muhammad would snatch away later, came to his rescue by suggesting a form of words to be cried aloud, which he declared he was given in a dream.

Muhammad adopted it instantly, and thus is given the origin of the summons, which, to this day, is heard from the lofty minarets of mosques throughout the world, calling Muslims to the place of worship, five times a day. The summons begins with the words: "*Allah is great! Allah is great! There is no allah but Allah.*" At dawn an exhortation is added to the end: "*Prayer is better than sleep!*" Muslims the world over call this "*Azan.*"

Belal Habshi, a freed black slave who was reputed to have a resonant voice, was the first to be given the responsibility of crying aloud the words of Azan every day, a duty he is eulogized even now for having performed well till the last day of his life.

Muhammad, at first, conducted everything in this mosque with great simplicity. At night, it was lighted by fire, ignited in raw and green trunks and leaves of a special tree that could be found only in the Arabian Peninsula. Since materials to preserve fire did not exist at the time, Arabs started flames by rubbing two stones together, a process that was invented by human beings during the so-called Stone Age.

Muhammad stood on the ground of the mosque and preached, leaning with his back against the trunk of one of the date trees, which served as pillars. Later on, he had a pulpit erected at the top of three steps in order to be elevated above the congregation. Traditions have it that when he first ascended the pulpit, the dead date-tree gave out a groan; whereupon, Muhammad gave it the option either to be transplanted to a garden, again to flourish, or to be transferred to Paradise, there to yield fruit in the afterlife to true believers. The date-tree, it is said, wisely chose the latter, in consequence whereof it remained buried under the pulpit, awaiting resurrection on the Day of Judgment.

During the period immediately following his arrival in Madina, Muhammad's conduct, behavior and preaching were sober, peaceful and benign. With the passage of time and increase in his political strength, however, his manner seems to have become harsh, threatening and belligerent. Impressed by his earlier mien, some of the Christians of the city had promptly enrolled themselves among his followers. They

were perhaps members of those Christian sects who held to the human nature of Jesus Christ and found nothing repugnant in the doctrines of Islam. In the religion of Islam, Jesus is highly venerated and believed to be one of the greatest among 124,000 to 240,000 prophets God is said to have sent to earth from the time of Adam to the time of Muhammad - the latter being the last and the greatest of them all.

A small number of Christians who lived in Medina, but did not convert to Islam, showed no hostility to the new faith, considering it far better than the old idolatry living with which they had grown disenchanted over a long period of time. They had also grown weary of the dissension and schisms at the time, seemingly an integral part of Christian orthodoxy, which had weakened their enthusiasm toward their religion, and disposed them to be easily influenced by the new doctrines that were then being propounded by Muhammad.

The situation with the Jews was different. They lived in Madina and its vicinity and were divided into rich and powerful families. Many of them showed no sign of favorable disposition to the doctrines propagated by Muhammad and his disciples. Anxious to woo them over to his side, he [Muhammad] modeled many of his doctrines on the dogmas of the Jewish faith and observed many of their religious requirements, such as giving alms and observing fasts. He allowed the small number of Jews who embraced Islam to continue with the observation of their Sabbath on Saturday, and following the Mosaic laws, he even ordered his followers to circumcise their new born male offspring, a practice that is followed by Muslims even today. As Muhammad had given

the later concession to the Jews out of his political expediency, but without telling his followers about it, this obligatory ritual of the Islamic faith failed to find a place in the bosom of the Quran.

In spite of his best efforts, Muhammad failed to bring the majority of the obstinate Jews to his fold. Out of necessity, he made covenants of peace with some; with others he kept on pleading to accept him as their promised Messiah or Prophet with the hope that his persistent efforts will, one day, bring him the desired result. Those were the best strategies, under the described circumstances, that Muhammad could adopt for buying time which he needed to strengthen his position in the territories of his future dominion.

It was the custom of the different religions of the East to have a *Qibla*, or a sacred point, toward which their followers turned their faces at the time of performing their prayers. The Sabeans, referred to in the Quran, faced toward the North Star; Persians, the fire-worshipping Zoroastrians, faced the East, it being the place of the rising sun; and the Jews turned toward their holy city of Jerusalem. Muslims, before their migration to Madina, faced the Ka'aba on the pattern of their pagan foes. But as the political necessity in Madina dictated Muhammad to show his deference to the Jewish faith for reasons stated before, he made Jerusalem his Qibla toward which he commanded all of his followers to turn their faces at the time of saying their prayers. Ibn Ishaq, one of Muhammad's earlier biographers, states that at one time, he had required his followers to face Syria in their prayers. This was because of the reason that he had developed a mysterious reverence to that country, presuming that it was that country

which had given shelter to patriarch Abraham after he was compelled, like himself, to leave his birth place of Chaldea.

On one front, Muhammad felt pleased with the state of his affairs in Madina. Here he was making proselytes almost daily, whereas he was hardly able to convert one hundred of the Meccan pagans to his faith over a period of about thirteen missionary years that he had spent there. But, on another, he faced a problem of different magnitude: starvation, sickness and discontentment had begun to arise among his fugitive followers from Mecca, whose faithfulness, obedience and adherence were crucial to him and to his cause. In spite of those fugitives being given all supportive encouragements by their Ansar hosts, they still faced starvation for want of food. They also did not have any money to buy them from the market. On top of it, the milder climate of their adopted city, to which they were not accustomed, made their lives difficult. Many suffered from fevers, and in their sickness and loneliness they longed for the loved ones whom they had left behind in Mecca at the time of their flight from there.

The gravity of the situation required Muhammad to take an immediate action. He, therefore, established a bond of brotherhood between fifty-four of the immigrants and a like number of the Ansars from Madina. Two persons thus linked together were pledged to stand by each other in trials and triumphs - a tie which knit their interests more firmly than that of the kindred. They were to be heirs to each other in preference to their blood relations. This concept of convenience not only gave the immigrants new homes, and close links with their new friends and allies, it also allowed them to take over some of their wives in order to mitigate their sexual sufferings. To alleviate their financial difficulties,

Muhammad had to wait for opportunities to present themselves at some appropriate time, but not in a distant future.

The stated relationship, one of Muhammad's expediencies, underwent a reversal when it created a problem for himself. In regard to marriages, he permitted later an adopted father, professing Islam, to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son. This practice the 'ignorant' pagans abhorred. Admonishing them for detesting such marriages, Muhammad told them that such unions of two sexes were justified in his eyes for the reason that these marriages do not involve two persons related to each other through blood. On the other hand, he, through the Quran, denied inheritance to the adopted sons and daughters for lack of a blood relationship between them and their adopted parents.

While Muhammad continued with the conversion of the idolatrous pagans of Aus and Khazraj at a rapid pace together with plotting of means to provide relief to his financially stifled followers from Mecca, his personality as a peaceful and patient preacher of Mecca underwent a complete change. He now began to treat himself as an executive leader of his growing community. His peaceful ambience changed to that of a powerful political figure, which prompted him to involve himself in politics and to take over the administration and justice system of Madina. At this time, he also took steps to teach his followers various manners that they needed to observe while dealing with him and his family members.

The uncompromising Jewish community of the city was an additional but important factor that Muhammad wanted to deal with an iron hand. It was the habit of the Madinese Arabs to spend long hours every day sitting in Jewish

quarters, discussing various topics and issues, which also included matters related to religions. The Jews believed that their religion was a superior one and that the pagans practiced an inferior faith. They, therefore, were in the habit of taunting their visitors whenever they had an opportunity to do so. The pagans, compelled by their financial and social conditions, tolerated them silently without protest. The Jewish rabbis, on their own part, prided themselves on the elevated positions they held among their fellow co-religionists, on account of their religious eruditions. They, too, treated the heathens contemptuously due to their supposedly inferior beliefs and practices.

Having been used to an elevated way of life, the Jewish rabbis treated Muhammad in the same way in which they treated their pagan neighbors. They thought he was simply an upstart in the realm of religions and that they could get away with anything they did to harass him. They, therefore, took immense pleasure in cross-examining Muhammad on the subject of the Old Testament stories, which he was fond of quoting, though haphazardly, in his sermons.

One of the questions the rabbis asked Muhammad related to the plagues with which Moses supposedly afflicted the Egyptians before his exodus from their country. Very often, they asked him deliberate questions with a view to revealing his ignorance and making him look like a fool. They ridiculed him on his religious doctrines, too. They also rejected his claim that he was the same Messiah whose impending arrival was foretold in their Scriptures, pointing out that he was not a descendent of David; hence, they reasoned, the question of his being the Messiah could not even be contemplated. Muhammad strongly resented the rabbis' ignominious

questions, as well as their contemptuous attitude that they exhibited towards him at every opportune occasion. In contrast to the pagans' helplessness, many scuffles are believed to have taken place between the Jews and the Muslims, following interrogations that his tormentors subjected Muhammad to, every now and then.

His ignorance and plagiarism notwithstanding, Muhammad continued to win over the pagans as his followers, a success that was naturally unwelcome to Abdullah Ibn Ubay, who harbored animosity towards him for the reason we have already mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, he was a wise and prudent man and was careful to conceal his pique. Before long, he, too, declared himself a convert but continued to remain the leader of those Arabs who secretly sneered at Muhammad's teachings, complaining of the confusion and danger which the coming of the Muslims had brought to Madina.

Muhammad, on his part, did not remain ignorant of those false Muslims' intentions, for spies were quick to bring him information (which he called revelations), which informed him of the ill designs those hypocritical people allegedly held against him. However, the shrewd and matured tactician that he was, Muhammad continued to co-exist with them for the time being without ever revealing his own designs and ambitions.

Let us now reflect on how Muhammad must have felt after becoming the virtual ruler of Medina. As would have been the case with most intelligent and ambitious men, he must have realized that his new status in Madina afforded him vast opportunities to compensate for the aggravated injury and insult that he had suffered meekly at the hands of his Meccan

antagonists during the twelve years of his missionary works there. His impulses told him that he was no more a fugitive from Mecca; rather he now held command over a powerful army of men drawn from daily converts as well as of the fugitives, who flocked to him from Mecca, and of the proselytes from the tribes of the desert who were of resolute spirit, skilled in the use of arms, and fond of partisan warfare. His self-assessment assured him that he was now able to realize his desires with ease, and retaliate decisively against those who opposed him in his mission. To impose his authority over his followers as well as on the common folks, he assumed the role of a prophet, which he claimed God had bestowed on him so that he could help the suffering masses of his land. To further his own agendas, he armed himself with a so-called divine command, which authorized him to use brute force, if necessary, to accomplish his ambition. At least such was the purport of the manifesto, which Muhammad is said to have issued at this epoch, thereby changing the whole tone and fortunes of his faith.

"Different prophets," he said, "have been sent by Allah to illustrate his different attributes: Moses his clemency and providence; Solomon his wisdom, majesty, and glory; Jesus Christ his righteousness, omniscience, and power - his righteousness by purity of conduct; his omniscience by the knowledge he displayed of the secrets of all hearts; his power by the miracles he wrought. None of these attributes, however, have been sufficient to enforce conviction, and even the miracles of Moses and Jesus have been treated with disbelief. I, therefore, the *last* of the prophets, am sent with the sword! Let those who promulgate my faith enter into no argument nor discussion, but slay all who refuse obedience to the law. Whoever fights for the true faith, whether he fall or

conquer, will assuredly receive a glorious reward." "The sword," he added, "is the key of heaven and hell; all who draw it in the cause of the faith will be rewarded with temporal advantages; every drop shed of their blood, every peril and hardship endured by them, will be registered on high as more meritorious than even fasting or praying. If they fall in battle, their sins will, at once, be blotted out, and they will be transported to paradise, there to revel in eternal pleasures in the arms of black-eyed houris."

Considering the above allurements as being insufficient, Muhammad added to them the concept of predestination to be the part of his inciting doctrines. Every event, he stated, was predestined from eternity and could not be avoided. No man could die sooner or later than his allotted hour, and when it arrived it would make no difference whether the angels of death should find him in the comfort of his bed or amid the storm of battle; no person in this world could be hurt or be killed without God's permission and Will. Skeptics ask: If all those were true, should we then hold the imaginary Satan or the devil responsible for all evil acts that humans commit on a daily basis? This is a perplexing question that needs an answer from those who are able to read God's mind and his intentions as easily as a trained Radiologist of our time reads the x-rays.

The belligerent dogmas introduced by Muhammad were particularly acceptable to the Arabs, for those harmonized well with their habits, and encouraged their predatory propensities. Virtually pirates of the deserts, it was no wonder that when Muhammad promulgated the doctrines of the Religion of Sword, they rushed to his side to be accepted as his followers. Despite the fact that the number of his followers

swelled overnight, he held back his authorization to launch violence against the unbelievers for a good length of time. Instead, he provided them with an opportunity to submit to his temporal authority and to pay him tributes. This was a shrewd decision. It enabled him to collect as many resources as were possible to feed and maintain his hungry converts, as well as to acquire the sinews of war that he knew he was going to need soon in order to make his mission successful. Very soon, however, Muhammad realized that the revenue he was collecting from the unbelievers in the form of tributes was insignificant compared to what he needed to feed and clothe his starving and half-naked followers. He, therefore, decided to launch raids on the Meccan caravans to meet his needs.

In the beginning, Muhammad launched three raids on the Meccan caravans; all headed by himself but without material result. The fourth he entrusted to Abdullah Ibn Jahsh, whom he sent out with eight or ten resolute brigands on the road toward South Arabia. As it happened to be the holy month of Rajab, a period considered sacred and thus free from violence and rapine, Abdullah had sealed orders from Muhammad, not to be opened until the third day of his mission. The orders were vaguely worded. Abdullah was required to reach the valley of Nakhla, between Mecca and Taif, where he was to watch for an expected caravan belonging to the Quraish of Mecca. "*Perhaps,*" concluded the orders shrewdly, "*thou mayest be able to bring us some tidings of it.*"

Abdullah understood the meaning of those words and, accordingly, he decided to act upon the instruction. While in the valley of Nakhla, he saw the caravan, consisting of several camels laden with merchandise and conducted by four men.

He sent after it one of his men, disguised as a pilgrim, to overtake it. The Quraishites, based on the conversation they had with the man, took him and his companions to be pilgrims, bound for Mecca. Moreover, it was the month of Rajab, when, according to their ancestral practices, they could travel the deserts without fear of being plundered. But hardly had they come to a halt when Abdullah and his band fell on them, killing one and taking two prisoners. The fourth escaped. The deceptive victors then returned to Madina with their prisoners and booty.

The entire city of Madina was scandalized at this breach of the holy month. Muhammad, finding himself in an indefensible position, pretended to be angry with Abdullah and, for some time, refused to accept his share of the loot. Acknowledging the vagueness of his instructions, he insisted that he had not commanded Abdullah to shed blood or to commit any violence during the holy month.

While the disgust, shared by the Quraish as well, persisted in Madina, Muhammad produced a revelation, purportedly from God, which read as under:

"They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month. Say: Fighting therein is a grave (offence); but graver is it in the sight of God to prevent access to the path of God, to deny Him, to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members. Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter."

Thus legitimizing his murder and rapine, Muhammad accepted his portion of the booty. He released one of the prisoners on payment of ransom; the other embraced Islam.

During the period of seventeen or eighteen months that Muhammad lived in Madina, friction between him and the Jews reached a significant intensity and the covenants that he

had concluded with them became ineffective. To signal the abandonment of his desire to co-habit with the Jews and to demonstrate his displeasure at them, he ordered his followers to face Mecca, instead of Jerusalem, while saying their prayers. He also discarded the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday and substituted it with Friday as the special day of the Muslim week.

During the same period of time, he laid down many tenets of the Muslim faith. Among those were the daily prayers, though it is not certain at what period of time those assumed their present form. Some scholars, supported by a number of Muhammad's statements, hold the view that there were only three daily prayers during Muhammad's lifetime. They, however, do not say when the number of those three daily prayers was increased to the present-day five prayers, and by whom.

The second duty laid upon the Muslims in this period on time was that of giving alms based on the practices of the Jews. The third tenet, declared simultaneously, was the fast of Ramadhan. Some authorities believe that Muhammad introduced fasting when he came to Madina in imitation of the Jewish fast of ten days. When, however, his relations with the Jewish tribes soured, he instituted a fast lasting the whole month of Ramadhan, intending it to look different from that of the Judaic observance.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

The city of Madina was situated at a strategic location, which afforded its inhabitants the ability to intercept caravans that traveled north on their way to Syria and south on their return to Mecca. In the autumn of 623 A.D., the annual caravan of the Quraishites traveled up the coast of the Red

Sea, west of Madina, on its way to Syria. The caravan, consisting of one thousand camels laden with Arabian merchandise, was under the command of Abu Sofian, one of Muhammad's sworn enemies. The Muslims failed in their attempt to intercept it.

The caravan, on its return journey to Mecca, left Damascus escorted by thirty horsemen in the month of Ramadhan, 624 A.D. Muhammad, on receiving information on the movement of the caravan, decided to seize it, no matter how, even though the month was a holy one for the Arabs, who considered raids and plunders in this time of the year a great sin. He contemplated the operation because it had a considerable importance for him as well as for the Muslim community of Madina.

The caravan represented a large part of the annual income of all Meccans, for, although rich merchants owned much of it, almost everyone in the town had some share in this venture. By corollary, if the Muslims were able to capture it, the Meccans would become paupers, and the plunderers wealthy overnight, with their leader's war chest correspondingly strengthened.

As determined, Muhammad set out to intercept the caravan with three hundred and fourteen men: eighty-three emigrants, or exiles from Mecca: sixty-one Ausites, and one hundred and seventy Khazrajites. The entire Muslim force, it is said, had only two horses and seventy camels. The troop mounted them in rotation in order to make a rapid march, with minimal fatigue. They reached the valley watered by the brook of Badr, and lay in wait near the ford over which the caravan was expected to pass.

While yet a hundred miles south of Damascus, intelligence reached Abu Sofian that Muhammad, with a superior army, was waiting near Madina to ambush his caravan. He hastened, therefore, to dispatch a messenger to Mecca on a fast dromedary, calling upon the Quraishites to send out an armed force to meet and escort him past the danger zone of Madina. Hearing the news from the messenger, Abu Jahl sounded the alarm from the roof of the Ka'aba. Confusion and consternation took over Mecca, and people assembled around Abu Jahl to decide on the course of their action. Hinda, the wife of Abu Sofian, having a firm determination mingled with a fierce and intrepid nature, exhorted all of her relatives and all other warriors to arm themselves and hasten to assist her husband. In a short time, a Meccan force of about one thousand men, divided into cavalry and infantry, was on its way to Medina, under the command of Abu Jahl, who was then seventy years old, but still retained all the vigor and spirit of a youth.

While the rescue force was advancing fast to a point of rendezvous, Abu Sofian was approaching it from another direction. On nearing the anticipated range of danger, he preceded his caravan by a considerable distance, carefully scanning every track and footprint on the road. Eventually, he came upon the track of Muhammad's army, having been guided to it by the discarded stones of the dates, which his soldiers had eaten during their march. The kernels of the Madinese dates are easily distinguishable by their small size.

Abu Sofian instantly changed his course and passed along the coast of the Red Sea until he considered himself out of danger. He then sent an envoy to meet and advise the

Quraishites that his caravan was safe and that they should return home.

The envoy encountered the Quraishites in full march. Learning that the caravan was safe, they halted and held a council to chart their next course of action. In the meantime, they dispatched a scout to spy upon the strength and condition of Muhammad's fighting men. The spy brought back word that they were about three hundred in strength and had not enough horses or camels to fight a winning battle. Learning of the statistics, many of the Meccans favored a battle to inflict a signal punishment on Muhammad and his followers in revenge for the slaying of their men at Nakhla. Another group was opposed to shedding blood of their kindred, even though Muhammad had sown seeds of discord by preaching a religion that separated son from father, brother from brother, accompanied by his attempts to seize their life-supporting caravans. Abu Jahl sided with the belligerents and the main body of the troops resumed its march once again. A considerable number of the forces, numbering about three to four hundred, which opposed engaging the Muslim army in a battle, turned back and returned to Mecca.

The Muslim force, in the meantime, continued its march to a point where it expected to meet its targeted caravan. After passing Safra, Muhammad called a halt. Here he received information that a strong contingent of the Quraishites had left Mecca to meet and escort the caravan. The informer, being unaware of the forces' whereabouts, could not pass on this vital piece of information to Muhammad, however. Under the circumstances, Muhammad convened a meeting and explained the situation to his men. Abu Bakr, Omar, and the

emigrants declared their readiness to follow Muhammad, no matter in which direction he led them.

Muhammad was, however, uncertain about the current attitude of the Ansars. Although they had concluded the *Pledge of Aqaba* with him purely for defensive matters, it had not required them to support him on such matters as that of raiding a peaceful caravan en route to its destination. In an uncertain situation, he decided to address the Ansars in order to find out their position on his present attempt at seizing the Meccan caravan.

Muhammad's address over, Saad Ibn Muadh, one of the chiefs of the Aus stood up and gave him his unwavering pledge to obey him in whatever task he might be asked to accomplish. Elated, he ordered his troops to march forward "in good courage, for God has promised us one of the two parties," meaning either the caravan, or the Quraish escort.

Part - 9

After marching another six or seven miles, Muslim forces set tents a short distance from the wells of Badr, which the opposing army was also approaching, each being ignorant of the other's movement. The informant employed by Muhammad brought him news that the Meccan forces were on their way to the place where his troops were encamped. At this news, the hearts of some of Muhammad's fighters sank, for they had joined the foray, expecting a little fight and much plunder. Now, they felt overwhelmed by the reported strength of their opponents, and dismayed at the prospect of fighting a fierce battle. Muhammad assured them victory in the following words:

"O Apostle! Rouse the Believers to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two

hundred: if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers: for these are a people without understanding” (8:65)

Muhammad's above statement was based on the Meccans' reported strength of about one thousand fighters. For raising his men' fighting spirits, he equated one of them with ten of their enemies. When his men questioned the absurdity of the equation, he unashamedly revised his nonsensical statement, stating:

“For the present, God hath lightened your (task), for He knoweth that there is a weak spot in you: but (even so), if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred, and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of God: for God is with those who patiently persevere” (8:66)

He brought down the fighting strength of his one man to that of two men of his enemy. This equation seemed reasonable to his fighting men, for they were three hundred and fourteen and their opponents about six to seven hundred, which means one Muslim combatant was required to take on, approximately, 1.91 to 2.23 men of the pagans in order to win the battle. Under the difficult conditions the Meccans faced, Muslim needed no heavenly intervention to overcome the superior number of their opponents.

After assuring success to his troops, Muhammad positioned them on a raised ground, with water at its foot. The troops, using the branches of date trees, erected a hut on the summit for Muhammad to take rest therein. They also kept a fleet camel standing by for him to escape, should the Meccan army defeat them.

The vanguard of the Meccan troops entered the valley, panting with thirst, and hastened to the stream for a drink. Hamza, the uncle of Muhammad, set a number of his men

upon them and slew their commander with his own hand. Only a single soldier of the Meccan vanguard escaped the slaughter.

The main body of the Meccan forces now arrived at the venue of the last massacre, challenging the bravest of the Muslim fighters to equal combat. A number of individual fights took place in which all of the Meccan challengers were defeated and slain. The battle then turned into a general melee.

Muslims, aware of their inferior strength, at first adopted a defensive posture from their strategic position on top of the hill (8:42). From their upper ground, they assailed the Meccans with flights of arrows whenever they sought to quench their intolerable thirst at the stream below. Muhammad, during all this time, remained within his hut worrying about the outcome of the battle.

The sporadic arrow flights soon flared up into a furious sword fight. In spite of their superior numbers, the Quraishites suffered a number of tactical disadvantages. They had advanced against the Muslims across the soft sand dunes, which left them victims of exhaustion after travelling for 12 days on foot, mules and horses (see Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Battlefield of the Prophet Muhammad*, p. 49), whereas the believers awaited them standing on firm soil, precluding any exertion whatsoever. Moreover, Muslims controlled the most essential commodity of the desert warfare: the water. The Meccans had none, and without it, no army -no matter how strong and large its size- could win a battle even against a smaller enemy, let alone the highly charged Muslim forces the pagans were faced with in this battle.

In spite of their setback, the Meccans were engaging the Muslims in a fierce fight when a violent squall whipped the sand into their faces, almost blinding them.

"Gabriel," cried Muhammad ecstatically, "with a thousand angels is falling upon the enemy!" God increased the number of the angels to three thousand strong in order to defeat a force of infidels, numbering about six to seven hundred, that was fighting a battle under some of the most insurmountable conditions.

Suddenly, as if to bolster the faith of his fighters in him, Muhammad rushed out of his hut, and picking up a handful of dust, cast it at the Meccans, crying out, "Confusion on their faces." Then ordering his men to charge upon the enemy, he cried: "Fight, and fear not," for "the gates of Paradise are under the shade of sword. He will assuredly find instant admission who falls fighting for the faith." While the battle was raging, Abu Jahl, who was urging his horse into the thickest of the conflict, received the blow of a scimitar and fell to the ground. Abdullah Ibn Masoud put his foot upon his breast and severed his head from his body.

For some time, the fight swayed back and forth, without either side gaining a clear advantage. At long last, the Meccans began to waver and lost ground. Then suddenly they broke and fled. Fifty of them remained dead on the ground, and nearly the same number was taken prisoners. Of the Muslims, eight were slain, whose names remain on record as martyrs to the faith.

The battle over, Abdullah Ibn Masoud brought the head of Abu Jahl to Muhammad. Eyeing the grisly trophy with exultation, he exclaimed, "This man was the Pharaoh of our Nation."

The number of casualties on the pagan side proves one point: That there were not as many pagan warriors involved in the battle of Badr as Muslim historians made out in their recollection of the event. They exaggerated the number of the pagan enemy in order to extol the Muslim virtues by dint of which, most Muslims believe, Muhammad and his followers defeated a "huge" number of their enemies, an inspiration that most Muslims of the present time are exhorted to employ while fighting their infidel foes. Or, the battle fought was not a fierce one, but the Muslim historians made it as such so that Muhammad looked like a victim, and not a perpetrator, of the crime that he committed against the pagans.

Muslim scribes attribute success in this battle to invisible angelic participation, noting that a thousand of them clad in long dazzling robes with white and yellow turbans, mounted on black and white stallions, came rushing like a blast and swept the Quraishites before them. They mention a pagan shepherd who had witnessed the miracle taking place and he, in this connection, is believed to have made the following statement:

"I was with a companion, a cousin," said the witness, "upon the fold of the mountain, watching the conflict, and waiting to join the victors to share the spoil. Suddenly we saw a great cloud moving toward us, and within it were the neighing of steeds and sound of trumpets. As it approached, we heard the terrific voice of the archangel as he urged his mare Haizum, "Speed! Speed! Oh Haizum!" At which awful sound the heart of my companion burst with terror, and he died on the spot. I, too, had almost shared his fate."

Ibn Abbas, who had testified to the occurrence, his statement having been confirmed by none other than Muhammad himself, corroborated the pagan's statement.

The gist of the matter stands as follows: God had sent down a large contingent of angels to fight against a small number of human beings, and the angels rode steeds - in spite of their having at least a pair of wings to fly with - undetected by human eyes and senses.

Before the victorious Muslims returned to Madina, a quarrel broke out among themselves over the distribution of the spoils. Though the caravan of Abu Sofian, which God had promised to the believers, had escaped, yet considerable booty of weapons and camels had fallen to the lot of the Muslims. Additionally, the prisoners were also expected to produce, through their ransom, a large sum of money, a prospect that none of the Muslim soldiers wanted to miss.

Muhammad ordered the booty divided equally among all the Muslims, who fought the battle. Although it was a long established custom among the Arabs to give a fourth part of the booty to their chief, he contended himself with the same share as that of the rest.

The equal distribution of the booty caused great dissatisfaction among the troops. Those who had taken part in the actual fighting and had been most active in collecting the spoils demanded a larger share than those who had stood aloof from the fray, as well as those old men who had remained back to guard the camp. The settlement of the issue became an important matter for Muhammad, especially when he, as a leader, was about to embark upon a career of predatory warfare. He, accordingly, decreed that in future, a fifth of the war-spoils would go to him and God, and the

remaining would be distributed among those who fought in the battles (8:41). In the distribution of the booty, Muhammad and God were to have first preference of choice: They were to select their part first, whereafter the leftovers were to be distributed among other claimants of the booty (Ibn Ishaq, op. cit. p.643).

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

Muhammad and his troops returned in triumph to Madina with the spoils and prisoners taken in the battle. Their success on the battleground propelled their prestige and morale to an extraordinary height. Having tasted the fruits of success, Muslims clamored for more expeditions against the pagans, primarily to loot them and to turn their womenfolk into their slaves.

Muhammad was not oblivious to the desires of his people. In fact, he himself possessed just such a yearning in his own heart. But in the absence of an opportunity, he dared not initiate an action that could have turned off those pagans who were seriously considering their assimilation into his religion. Wherefore, in wait for an opportunity, he busied himself momentarily in the propagation of his faith.

In this effort, he found himself making little progress due to assaults launched against him by the satirical poets of the city. Muhammad, however, found an effective way to deal with this menace: he engaged one of them to defend him. Hassan Ibn Thabit was middle-aged and had already achieved fame as a poet. He had spent some years at the court of Bani Ghassan princes in Syria. Asked by Muhammad if he could defend him from the attacks of his enemies, Hassan is said to have stuck out his tongue and declared, "There is no armor that I cannot pierce with this weapon."

Many of the pagan and Jewish satirical poets were silenced by Hassan's quick-witted responses. Still, there remained some who continued, unabated, to ridicule Muhammad and his doctrines with their satires. Hassan could not handle them ultimately, so Muhammad decided to take measures against them.

In implementation of his decision, Asma, a Jewish poetess, was put to death for her satirical effusions. Abu Afak, an Israelite of very ripe age, was likewise slain for indulging in satire against Muhammad. Another Jewish poet, Kaab Ibn Ashraf, who tried to rouse the Quraishites to vengeance paid dearly with his life.

Having rid himself of the satirical poets, Muhammad turned his attention to another serious problem. The Jews of Madina, he felt, had become increasingly hostile to him as time passed, and he found them erecting stumbling blocks on his way to success. He, therefore, decided to confront them with an iron hand.

The recent victory at Badr had completely changed Muhammad's position; he was now a triumphant chief of a growing power. He felt highly confident of success in campaigns that he thought of initiating against his Jewish enemies. The first Jewish community that he took action against was the tribe of Bani Qainuqa. The members of this tribe were goldsmiths and were probably the richest among the Jewish tribes. They numbered about seven hundred; three hundred of whom are said to have been armed. They also made armor but owned no fields or fruit gardens. An altercation in the market, involving two Muslims and a Jew, provided Muhammad with an excuse to lay siege against the entire settlement to which the offending Jew belonged. It

lasted for two weeks and then the Jews surrendered. Muhammad promptly sentenced them to death.

Two tribes among the Aus and the Khazraj were allies of Bani Qainuqa, but both had embraced Islam. The leader of the first tribe went to Muhammad and renounced the alliance. Abdullah Ibn Ubay was the leader of the other ally whom we have already met as being a peace-loving man who abhorred bloodshed. On hearing of the death sentence declared on the tribe of Bani Qainuqa, Abdullah rushed to Muhammad, and taking hold of his cloak, begged him to spare the lives of the condemned Jews.

Muhammad, reacting in an angry rage, at first refused to oblige him, but overtaken by his insistence as well as by his political insight, he relented and spared the lives of the seven hundred doomed Jewish men. He, however, ordered them to leave Madina and settle in Syria. At the time of their migration, they were compelled to leave most of their property behind them. They were permitted to take as many animals as were necessary to carry them to their destination.

The expulsion of the Jews from Madina helped Muhammad to overcome some of his immediate problems. It enabled him, first of all, to solve most of the accommodation problem of the Meccan refugees by allotting them the abandoned homes of the expelled Jews. Secondly, the wealth the Jews had left behind helped him to start building up his own state exchequer to finance the future expeditions, which, he knew, were just around the corner.

The recent defeat at the hands of the Muslims at Badr had struck the Quraishites of Mecca with humiliation and astonishment. They failed to understand how a fugitive recently driven from their midst could muster the strength to

challenge them to a battle and then rob them of their pride. Several of their bravest and ablest men had fallen victim to his sword; yet, as if not content with this, he had taken many of their men captives and now awaited a humiliating ransom.

Abu Lahab, Muhammad's uncle and always his staunchest opponent, had been unable to take part in the last battle due to his illness. He died a few days after hearing of the Meccans' ignominious rout, his death, it is believed, having been hastened by the exasperation of his spirits.

But no one was as much touched by the tragedy of the battle as was Abu Sofian. It was one thing to reach Mecca safely; it was another to hear about the triumph of the man he detested from the core of his heart, and finding his own home desolate. He was more agonized by the lamentations of his wife, Hinda, who had lost her father, her uncle, and her brother to the swords of Hamza and Ali. She was now crying out in rage day and night for vengeance on those men.

In her desire for revenge, Hinda vowed not to anoint her hair and not to sleep with her husband or any of her lovers until all the deaths of her near and dear ones were avenged. Abu Sofian also swore not to eat food cooked in oil and not to sleep with his wife or any of his paramours until he had taken revenge for the deaths of the leaders of his Quraish clan.

Abu Sofian and Hinda had taken those vows of vengeance following a tribal law of the Arabs, which ordained that whoever shed the blood of a man owed blood on that account to the family of the slain person. Muhammad upheld this ancient barbarous law and gave sanction to retaliatory acts of bloodshed, for he said: "Believers, retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed: a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave, and a female for a female."

While Abu Sofian was thinking to raise a Meccan army to attack the Muslims, Muhammad set out, in June of 624 A.D., with four hundred and fifty men to raid the tribes of Ghatafan. They received timely warning, however, and moved away to safety. Muslims returned home without fighting or spoils. This expedition is called "The raid of Dhu Amr."

Two months later, Muhammad again set out with three hundred of his raiders to raid Bani Sulaim. They reached a place called Bahran and, finding no one, returned to Madina, again empty-handed.

The Meccans regularly heard about those raids, conducted by Muhammad, and they quivered in fear. While they were still trying to figure out ways to contain his growing power, time came to send their yearly caravan to Syria. Knowing the risk their caravan faced if it traveled by the conventional route, they decided to send it to its destination via Najd, a route that was not frequently used by caravans and which they considered to be a safe passage. Somehow, information about the caravan bearing toward Najd reached Madina, giving Muhammad ample time to prepare himself for its seizure.

He gathered a team of one hundred brigands headed by his adopted son, Zaid Ibn Harith, and detailed it with its mission. The marauders surprised the caravan and captured it at the well of Qadra in Najd. The rapine proved extremely rich for the Muslims, for a great part of the caravan had been laden with silver.

Following the events of Badr and Najd, the Quraishites set up a fund with the intention of financing the build-up of a powerful army. It seems that the fund was well subscribed,

the ordinary Meccans and their merchants keenly recognizing the perils with which the Muslims had endangered their means of livelihood. At the same time, they called upon Bani Kinana, who lived on the coastal plain and had a pact of cooperation with them, to assist them in their struggle against the Muslims. As was the custom, eminent poets were also asked to join the expeditionary forces to stir up their valor and ferocity in the impending battle.

Soon after the raising of a strong force was completed for curtailing Muhammad's plunderous activities, it left Mecca on its way to Madina under the command of Abu Sofian, presently the most prominent leader of the Meccans. It consisted approximately of three thousand men, the majority of them fully equipped for the battle. The Meccan army arrived on a Wednesday below the mount called *Uhud* and remained there, resting until Thursday. In the meantime, the news of the arrival of this massive force reached Muhammad, causing serious consternation among the Muslims. They held hasty consultation to find ways to face the threat, Muhammad being inclined to defend the city from within, in order to avoid the exposure of his forces in an open field.

Many elders, including Abdullah Ibn Ubay, strongly supported Muhammad. All the younger people who had not had the chance to take part in the battle of Badr and were consequently deprived of the booty, insisted on going out to fight the enemy in the open. Their insistence had its roots in their belief in Muhammad, who had attributed the Muslim victory at Badr to the heavenly help, rather than to human strength. They believed that God would help them with angels this time, too, and make them victorious over their enemy. Their inferior number, therefore, was of no

consequence to them, nor did it make any difference in their thinking process.

Nevertheless, Abdullah still insisted on remaining within the city and defending it without putting their lives at unnecessary risk. Muhammad stalled a decision, but when his young followers became irresistible, he gave in. Donning his armor, he left the safety of the city, accompanied by his troops, to fight his enemy on the turf that the latter had chosen to test his strength once again.

On Saturday morning, Muhammad and his troops sighted the enemy. Abdullah Ibn Ubay, seeing the strength of the Quraish forces, turned back with three hundred of his followers, leaving Muhammad with only seven hundred Muslims to fight the large number of the infidels. Undeterred by the defection, Muhammad continued his advance, in course of which he assured his soldiers of receiving help from five thousand angels, provided he and his followers remained firm and acted diligently. In a short time, Muhammad found himself facing his formidable antagonists, determined to inflict a singular defeat on him and his followers.

In spite of being outnumbered by the enemy, Muhammad proceeded to draw his men in order of battle. To deal with the mounted Meccans, he placed fifty of his archers on the Muslim flank, with strict orders to repel any attack by the enemy's horsemen and on no account to leave their strategic position. He then handed over his standard to Musab Ibn Omar and his sword to Abu Dujana, with orders to smite the enemy until it bent in his hand.

Both sides now faced each other. As was their tradition, single combats between valiant warriors from both sides opened the contest. When Muslims saw the Meccan veterans

being defeated by their warriors, they rushed forward shouting their war cry, "*Allahu Akbar*," and fell upon the enemy with the same defiance and fury that had brought them a grand victory at the battle of Badr. In the rampant bloodshed that ensued, Muslims, it is said, gained the upper hand when some of the pagans took flight. At this juncture, the archers posted on the flank to keep the enemy horsemen at bay allegedly left their station to join their advancing swordsmen in order to lay their claim to the plunder.

At this moment, a Meccan cavalry saw the Muslim archers leaving their position. Seizing the opportunity, they swung around and charged the unprotected rear of the advancing Muslim line, which included Muhammad, and some of his soldiers. The unexpected onslaught created a state of pell-mell in the rank of the Muslim forces- a situation that inspired the Meccans to rally around their standard of war.

In the confusion that occurred in the Muslim rank and file, a swordsman by the name of Ibn Qamia, of Bani Kinana, attacked Musab Ibn Omar, Muhammad's standard-bearer, and cut him down with a single slash from his sword. Mistaking his victim for Muhammad, Qamia waved his sword over his head and cried, "I have killed Muhammad! Muhammad is dead!" Muslims, already disoriented by the rear attack of the horsemen, panicked uncontrollably by the news of their leader's death and fled. In their haste, they ran past Muhammad and the little group around him without even seeing him. His shouts to reunite and to fight also went unnoticed. Taking advantage of the disarray in the Muslim camp, the Meccans began moving toward the small group that was surrounding Muhammad, showering on it a rain of arrows, as well as stones from their slings. A stone struck

Muhammad in the face, knocking out one of his incisors. He also received a blow on his head, forcing him to fall to the ground, his visage fully covered with blood.

Here a miracle-like event is again believed to have taken place. A group of Meccans went past Muhammad, who was lying helplessly on the ground, mortally wounded. As willed by God, his enemies failed to recognize him. The so-called miracle that saved Muhammad from his enemies inspires Muslims even today. The very mention of it turns them into a kind of ecstasy that is not possible for a man to display in a normal condition.

Once the Meccans passed by, Muhammad got up from the ground and supported by a small group of his followers, he hurried up the rocky slopes of Mount Uhud, where he concealed himself in a hollow.

For the Meccans, the battle was over. They took pride in the fact that they had defeated the Muslims. Before leaving the battlefield, however, Abu Sofian stood at a point opposite the hollow where Muhammad had hidden himself, and called up to the Muslims to know if, in fact, Muhammad was dead. On being told by Omar that he was alive and that he was hearing them speak at that very moment, Abu Sofian threw a challenge to the Muslims to meet him at Badr next year for another round of fighting, and then left the grounds to saddle his camels and horses in preparation for the journey that would take him back to Mecca and into the arms of those on whose behalf he had, in 625 A. D, waged and won the just concluded battle.

Muslims attribute the lack of desire on Abu Sofian's part to kill Muhammad to a miracle, which they claim God had caused, along with others, as described above, to save him

from death. Unfortunately, it is one of the fallacious beliefs that is known to have always been helping the believers in adhering to their faiths. In reality, neither science nor philosophy accepts the existence of miracles. "For instance," wrote Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, "Cicero declared that 'there are no such things as miracles;' they were invented 'for the piety of the ignorant folk.' Celsus said that miracles, whether attributed to Christ or Moses, were 'insufficiently attested and most improbable.'" But, despite knowing the fact that miracles do not exist, many scholars and scientists, inspired by their respective religions, suffered from its tantalizing spell. The above-named Muslim gentleman is one among many scholars who believed in the scientific fact, but forced by his Muslim conviction, he sacrificed science at the altar of his religion so that he could attribute Muhammad's success at Badr to a miracle. He concurred: "The fact that he [Muhammad] won the battle [of Badr] was, indeed, a miracle". That is why he attributed it entirely to God (*Muhammad & the Quran*, pp. 25 & 32).

The real reason behind sparing Muhammad's life by Abu Sofian was, perhaps, the non-blood thirsty nature of the pagans. The nomadic pagans fought wars and battles among themselves, either for plundering or for revenge, but they always avoided shedding blood of their own people. It was this tribal practice that prevented Abu Sofian from killing Muhammad, whom he considered to be one of his kindred, despite the fact that he had committed many offences against his own people. Alternatively, Abu Sofian might have believed that by sparing his life, he was doing Muhammad a favor in reciprocation of which he expected him to abandon his murderous attacks on the Meccan caravans. But, as history tells us, he was dead wrong in his assumptions, for

Muhammad continued on his path until the entire population of the Peninsula surrendered themselves to his dictatorial authority for nothing else but to save their lives.

In order to soothe his followers' injured ego, Muhammad attributed their defeat to the Will of God. Asked why God did not help them this time with five thousand angels from heaven, he told them: "God did this {promised the angels} only as good news for you that your hearts might be at rest herein. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty the Wise, i.e. I mentioned the armies of My angels only as a good news for you and that your hearts might be at rest herein, because I know your weakness and victory comes only from Me because of My sovereignty and power for the reason that power and authority belong to Me, not to any one of my creatures." (Ibn Ishaq, op. cit. p. 392)

The aforesaid statement makes it clear: God had no intention to help the Muslim fighters, and Muhammad knew it. God made the promise of the angelic help only to boost their moral; and they lost their moral when they failed to stand firm and wavered in the face of their enemy's onslaught. It did not matter to God that the Muslims suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the infidels, for this defeat was intended to teach them a lesson, which would prevent them, in future, from doing what they did in the just concluded battle.

Part - 10

OTHER RAIDS

Muhammad's debacle at the battle of Uhud affected, for a time, his cause unfavorably among some Arabs and the Jewish tribes. Two months after the battle, a group of tribesmen from the towns of Adhal and Kara came to him,

requesting him to send some of his missionaries to instruct them and their people in his religion. He agreed and sent with them six of his disciples who were well versed in the faith. When the party was about thirty miles from Mecca, the deceitful deputies fell upon the unsuspecting Muslims, killing four of them and carrying the other two to Mecca, where they sold them into slavery of the Quraish.

The people of Najd are alleged to have committed a similar act of treachery against Muhammad. Claiming to be Muslims, they sought his help to contain their enemies. Acceding to their request, he sent a number of his followers to aid them in their efforts. Those Muslim mercenaries were attacked by the Bani Suliam at a place about four days' journey from Madina and slain almost to a man.

On his way to Madina, the escapee named Amru Ibn Omeia met two unarmed Jews of the Bani Amir, whom he fell upon and killed them. The tribe of Bani Amir, being at peace with Muhammad, called upon him to redress the killings. He referred the matter to another rich Jewish tribe of Bani Nadheer for mediation. This tribe was bound to peace by a treaty, which it had concluded with Muhammad when he first arrived in Madina. The chief of the tribe invited Muhammad to a meeting, which he attended in the company of a number of his followers.

Having received his guests, the chief invited them to partake of a meal in an open space before his mansion. As Muhammad sat down, an angel informed him that he had been decoyed to the place to be crushed to death by a millstone that would later be thrown from the top of the mansion. Alarmed by the disclosure, Muhammad abruptly

left the scene and hastened to Madina without telling anyone the cause of his sudden departure.

Both the incidents, though unproven by independent sources, are said to have aroused in Muhammad intense rage; consequently, he ordered the whole tribe of Bani Nadheer to leave the country within ten days at the pain of death. When they were about to leave, a man by the name of Abdullah persuaded them to stay on, promising them his help should Muhammad attack them. The attack came, but the Jews saw no help coming their way. They, therefore, shut themselves in their castle, where Muhammad besieged them. His army cut down the date trees on which the Jews' lives depended. The beleaguered Jews resisted the siege for six days before they capitulated on account of their supplies having run out. Muhammad permitted them to leave, each with a camel-load of their effects but no weapons. Some of them banished to Syria, others settled down in Khaybar. Khaybar was at a distance of seven days' journey from the evictees' place of banishment. It was a strong Jewish settlement, which had a number of fortresses built for its defense.

The eviction of the Jews, on false pretexts, afforded Muhammad great booty which he declined to share with his followers, telling them of a revelation in which he decreed that any booty gained without striking a blow, was not won by man, but was a gift from God to him, to be expanded in ways he saw fit.

Other raids conducted during this period included one against the neighborhood of Tabuk. All expeditions yielded rich spoils, much to the delight of the Muslim community,

which was then on the verge of emerging as a powerful force, destined to change, forever, the face of our world.

At this time, we will deviate once again from our narrative and focus briefly on Muhammad's sensual character. Ibn Ishaq, a prominent Muslim historian, mentions a dialogue between him and a certain Jabir Ibn Abdullah, which he quotes as follows:

“I went out with the Apostle on the raid of Dhar al Riqā at Nakhla on a feeble old camel of mine. On the way back, the company kept going on ahead while I dropped further behind until the Apostle rode up to me and asked me what the trouble was. I told him that my camel was keeping me back and he told me to make it kneel. I did so and the Apostle made his camel to kneel and said, ‘Give me this stick you are holding’. He took it and prodded the beast a few times. Then he told me to remount and off we went. By Him who sent him with the truth, my old camel kept up with the rapid pace of his camel”.

“As we were talking, the Apostle asked me if I would sell him my camel. I said that I would give it to him but he insisted on buying it, so I asked him to make me an offer. He said he would give me a dirham. I refused and said that it would be cheating me. Then he offered two dirhams and I still refused and the Apostle went on raising his offer until it amounted to an ounce of gold. When I asked him if he was really satisfied, he said he was and I said that the camel was his”.

“Then he asked me if I were married; then was she a virgin or a woman previously married. I told him she had been married before and he said, ‘No young girl so that you could sport together!’

Like the Jews, female virginity was of paramount importance to Muhammad. Following the Torah, he forbade sex before the marriage. Those girls who engaged themselves in pre-marital sex and lost virginity are generally to be flogged a hundred times. For commission of adultery, women may be stoned to death. Muslim men usually escape punishments by virtue of the innate advantages granted them by God.

Muhammad's defeat in the battle of Uhud prompted some of the Arab tribes to take up arms against him. The tribe of Bani Mostalek was one of them. Learning through his intelligence of the warlike preparations of the tribe, he immediately took to the field where his enemy was expected to engage the Muslims. Muhammad was leading a force of his disciples, which was followed by a contingent of Khazrajites, led by their chief Abdullah Ibn Ubay.

The rapid mobilization of the Muslim forces surprised their enemy, and in the confusion that befell the camp of Bani Mostalek, its leader, Prince al Harith, was killed very early in the combat, causing his troops to take to their heels. Muhammad ended up taking two hundred prisoners, five thousand sheep, and one thousand camels as the fruits of his victory.

THE BATTLE OF THE DITCH

After the battle of Uhud, the Meccans -under the leadership of Abu Sofian- continued to build up their strength to engage Muhammad in a final battle. With this intention in mind, they also formed a confederacy with the tribe of Ghatafan and other tribes of the desert, as well as with many Jews of Nadheer whom he had expelled previously from their homes. At the end of their preparations, the Meccans are said

to have raised an army of ten thousand men, all ready to march upon Madina to seize it and to eliminate Muhammad and his followers, who had become a constant threat to them and to their caravans.

Muhammad, as had always happened in the past, got early news of the impending attack. He hastily gathered a force of his own, consisting of about three thousand warriors. Knowing the strength of his enemy and remembering the reverses of Uhud, he decided this time to defend Madina from within its walls.

While necessary preparations were being made, Salman the Persian, whom we have already met earlier, suggested to Muhammad a unique measure that he had seen the Persians employing in the defense of their cities. It was the digging of a moat at some distance outside the walls, which prevented the enemies from launching their attacks on the cities thus defended.

This pattern of defense being hitherto unseen and unheard of in Arabia, Muhammad adopted it instantly. Setting a large number of men to dig the moat, he himself is said to have contributed his own labor with a view to motivating his followers to expedite its completion before the arrival of his enemy.

During the digging of the trench, a number of miracles are claimed to have taken place. One such miracle relates to Muhammad having fed a large number of people from a single basket of dates, which remained full, after all were fully satisfied. The other miracle was worked out at a feast in which he is said to have fed a thousand men with a lamb and a loaf of bread. Yet, it is claimed, enough remained to entertain a large number of workers who were digging the

moat. These miracles are to be believed in, for Jesus Christ had also performed similar miracles to convince his followers with his divine power.

Another miraculous wonder is believed to have occurred during the excavation: the rocks which Muhammad struck with his hammer set off sparks, one illuminating all of the Yemen; the second brightening the imperial palace of Constantinople; and the third lighting up the towers of the royal palace of Persia. These were the portents from heaven, which represented the future conquest of Islam.

The moat was barely finished when the Meccans arrived and were confronted with the strange hurdle the Muslims had erected on their way. Perplexed, they laid siege to the settlement from across the ditch.

Muhammad, with three thousand of his men, stayed behind the wall, contemplating ways to avoid a second humiliation at the hands of his enemy, who were now gathered at the doors of his sanctuary. The siege continued, with some bloody skirmishes now and then taking place between some individuals representing the besiegers and the besieged.

While the siege lingered on, spies brought word to Muhammad that the Jewish tribe of Kuraiza, who had a strong fort near the city and had made a covenant of peace with him, joined his enemy in a secret compact. This information caused great consternation to Muhammad and he began plotting his own plan to diffuse the united threat of his enemies. The plan he came up with beats all the standards of our modern day warfare.

He sent a man called Nuaim Ibn Masood of the tribe of Ghatafan to visit secretly the camps of the confederates and to

sow dissension among them. Accordingly, the man went to the Kuraizites and stirred up their sentiments by telling them that they were fools to support the Quraishites in their struggle against the Muslims; for, he told them, in case of their defeat they would simply retreat to Mecca and be secure. Their other allies, he continued, would similarly be safe by retiring to their distant homes, thus isolating themselves from the burnt Muhammad's retaliation. Ultimately, he told them, it would be they who would be left alone to bear his wrath for the alliance they had entered into with the Quraishites. So adopting the role of the fiend Iblis (it is the name given to Satan by the Quran), he advised them not to make common cause with the Quraishites unless they gave them hostages as surety toward their own participation in the struggle to break, for good, Muhammad's power.

Thus cultivating the seed of discord in the minds of the Kuraizites, Nuaim went to the Quraishites and the tribe of Ghatafan, warning them not to confide in the Jews of Kuraizites, who, he informed them, intended to require hostages from them, only to turn them over to the Muslims to secure advantage for themselves.

The trap, thus artfully laid, showed its result almost at once. Abu Sofian sent word on Friday evening to the Kuraizites to be ready the next morning to join them in a general assault against the Muslims. The Jews refused to join the foray, telling the Quraishites that Saturday was their Sabbath, on which day their religion forbade hostilities. They also told them of their intention not to participate in any future battle unless they gave them hostages to guarantee their own commitment to stand by them to the end. Since both the Quraishites and the Ghatafanites found truth in what

Nuaim had told them, they dared not launch any attack on the entrenched Muslims.

The siege continued for a month without a sign that the besieged were planning to come out of their shelter and battle the besiegers. Under the circumstance, the Meccans could do nothing but wait. While they remained idle in their camps, however, a cold storm accompanied by rain and a sweeping blast fell upon them like a bolt from the blue. Their tents blown away, and their campfire extinguished, they suddenly found themselves exposed to bitter cold and the hazards of the desert. In the moment of their distress, they received information that Muhammad was on his way to fall upon them with his forces. Panic and confusion engulfed the Meccans. Failing to restore calm to his forces, Abu Sofian mounted his camel and issued order of retreat.

JEWS PUT TO SWORD

With the menacing confederates gone out of his way, Muhammad turned to take revenge on Bani Kuraiza. Having no means to protect themselves from the huge Muslim onslaught, the Kuraizites shut themselves in their castle and withstood a siege for many days. At long last, they were overtaken by famine and they gave up, soliciting the intercession of their old friends and protectors, the Ausites. The leaders of the latter implored Muhammad to grant the Jews his mercy under the same terms he had given to the tribe of Qainuqa. He hesitated for a while and then in a show of acquiescence, he decided to leave their fate to the judgment of Saad Ibn Moad, the chief of the Ausite tribe, who, he knew, harbored an ill-will against the Kuraizites. It originated from the recent hostility at moat during which, he had sustained a fatal injury on his person, and from which he had no hope of

recovery. He held the Kuraizite Jews responsible for his impending death. He, therefore, longed to smite them with vengeance before death caused him to leave this world. Fate soon gave him his opportunity and he did not fail to put it to his desired use.

The Kuraizites, on the other hand, knew nothing about the ill feeling that Saad nurtured against them. In fact, they were elated at his selection as the mediator of their fate, for he had been their friend, and they expected a decision from him in their favor. They were dead wrong.

Brought with much difficulty to the site of judgment, Saad demanded from the unsuspecting Jews an oath to abide by his decision. As soon as the oath was taken, he sentenced all the men to death, their women and children to slavery, and their properties confiscated to the Muslims.

The Jews were dumbfounded, but there was no chance of an appeal. Following the verdict, seven hundred (some say eight hundred) of the Kuraizite men were herded in chains to a place in Madina, since called the *Market of the Kuraizites*, where graves had been dug, well in advance, to receive their dead bodies. Then he [Mohammad] sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900 (Ibn Ishaq, op. cit. p. 464). The majority of the Jewish men thus eliminated, there remained no major hurdle to prevent him from becoming a man of Sword. Sword later on became an emblem of his faith.

The massacre was followed by the seizure of a huge quantity of spoils, which included flocks, herds, and camels. Each foot soldier had one lot, each horseman, three: two for

his horse and one for himself. A fifth part of the whole was set aside for Muhammad and God.

MUHAMMAD BECOMES A TYRANT

Successful raids against the Jews brought immense wealth to Muhammad. In a very short period of time, he became a rich man. He owned palm-date fields and orchards, which originally belonged to the Jews. His newly acquired wealth enabled him not only to acquire all the arms he needed for his fighters, the power his wealth brought him also enabled him to acquire a large number of women to fill up his harem. Simultaneously with him, his followers also saw a change in their lifestyles; their indebtedness to the Jews disappeared; instead of being at the back and forth of the Jewish calls, they now enjoyed a carefree life; they lived in those homes which previously belonged to their former masters. While they were still enjoying the fruits of their past murderous adventures, their propensity for plundering received fresh encouragements from their leader, who, having drawn for himself immense benefits from them in the past, announced, in the meantime, his intention to launch new excursions against those Jews who still remained beyond his domain.

As the adage says that *absolute power absolutely corrupts*, Muhammad's absolute power over most of the Medinese people turned him into an absolute tyrant. He decreed that those pagans who had not accepted Islam thus far should convert to it forthwith. Those who resisted his decree faced stiff punishments from him. Although we are not aware of how frequently or to how many offending pagans he meted out punishments, we are able to point out its severity from a statement that some of his associates have left for us to read in the Quran. It says:

"They swear by God that they are believers like you. Yet they are not. They are afraid of you. If they could find a shelter or a cave, or any hiding place, they would run in frantic haste to seek refuge in it [from your wrath]" (9: 56-57)

The above statement tells us all about the ferocious nature that Muhammad possessed and exhibited towards those pagans who hid from him their religious inclination. How brutally he must have treated his real enemies must not at all be a difficult task for all the open-minded people to guess.

THE RAID ON THE JEWS OF KHAYBAR

Muhammad entered the sixth year of his migration to Madina, having in the meantime acquired great wealth and power. He now longed to visit the place of his birth and to link it to the very foundation of his religion. Mecca was sacred in the eyes of the Arabs and its alienation was retarding the spread of his faith. He decided, therefore, to visit Mecca and to perform his *Umra*, the lesser pilgrimage that any Muslim can carry out any time of the year. It was Dhu al Qaada, a month preceding that of the greater pilgrimage -both months being months of peace- in which he set out for Mecca, accompanied by many of his followers. They had with them seventy camels for sacrifice at the ancient idolatrous temple of Ka'aba, which still remained in the hands of the infidels, with all the ancestral pagan rites having undergone no change whatsoever. Muhammad knew that the news of his approach to Mecca would cause a stir among the Meccans, so he himself donned the conventional garb of a pilgrim and had all the beasts garlanded to demonstrate his good intention to his suspicious opponents.

His efforts went in vain, however. A confused rumor of his movement reached the Meccans. Suspecting foul play, they

dispatched a powerful force to take position in a valley about two days' journey from Mecca, to check the advance of the Muslims.

Muhammad, having heard of the Meccans' movement, detoured from his original path. Taking a difficult route through the defiles of the mountains, he reached the plain near Mecca, where he pitched his tents at a place called **Hudaybiyya**, which is considered to be located within the sacred boundaries of Mecca. He then sent the Meccans his assurances of peaceful intention and sought from them the rights of pilgrimage.

Envoys moved to and fro, but the Meccan pagans remained determined not to allow the Muslims, whom they considered to be apostates, to enter into the holy shrine of Ka'aba to perform the Umra. After protracted negotiations, both parties agreed to conclude a treaty of peace. The pact, inter alia, included a term, which required the Muslims to return to Madina this time. It, however, permitted them to perform their Umra the following year, to remain in Mecca for three days, and then to withdraw to their homes in Madina. This agreement, called the '**Treaty of Hudaybiyya**', was concluded in 628 A.D.

Muslims returned to their homes, disappointed and dejected at not being able to perform their sacred rites at the temple of Ka'aba. Muhammad consoled them, however, with the tidings that their wishes would be fulfilled the following year in a befitting manner.

Discontentment and depression, nonetheless, prevailed among many of Muhammad's followers. To cheer them up, he conceived of an expedition that he knew would not only make them forget the humiliation of Hudaybiya, but it would

also gratify their love of plunder by seizing enormous amount of booty from the tribe he plotted to raid.

At a distance of seventy-five miles north of Madina was situated the city of Khaybar, inhabited by Jews who had grown rich by commerce and agriculture. A part of their fields was cultivated with grain and dotted with groves of palm trees; the other part was devoted to pasturage, covered with flocks and herds and fortified by several forts and a citadel. Khaybar had also become a sanctuary for those Jews whom Muhammad had uprooted from their homes in and around Madina and made to flee at the threat to their lives. Moreover, the settlement's abundant wealth made it an appropriate prey for that warfare which Muhammad had declared against all enemies of God.

One day in 629 A.D., Muhammad collected a force of twelve hundred foot soldiers and a cavalry of two hundred horsemen, intending to obliterate the Jews in the city of Khaybar. Arriving at their destination, Muslims began to assail all those inferior forts which were located outside the city. Those gave in to the marauders without any resistance. The huge booty captured from these castles became "gifts from Allah," not to be shared with others but to be possessed by Muhammad, as decreed previously by God.

Having thus captured the inferior forts, Muhammad launched his attack on the city of Khaybar itself. Protected by stronger forts and a citadel, the settlement was deemed so impregnable by its ruler that he had turned it into a depository where he stored all his treasures. It was well defended, too. In the face of a ferocious attack, its defenders offered a stiff resistance to the Muslims, repulsing all of their assaults. Though for a long time, none of the numerous

fortifications fell to the Muslims, they still continued to exert pressure on the defending Jews. At length, the invaders gained upper hand and captured all but two of the forts and the citadel. Thereafter, Muslims set up a siege on the remaining forts. During the siege, which lasted for fourteen days, Muhammad is said to have devoted most of his time to prayer. He is believed to have chosen a rock as the place of worship, around which he made seven daily circuits, similar to the ritual of encircling the Ka'aba - a pagan practice that he still followed, despite his preaching to the contrary. In time, his followers are believed to have erected a mosque at this site to preserve its sanctity.

When the Jews had been exhausted by the siege, Muhammad launched a determined attack aimed at flushing out his besieged victims from their fortresses. The brute force had its effect, and the Jews surrendered themselves to the soldiers of God.

The Jewish capitulation yielded huge booty to the victors, which proved to be the richest that God had as yet bestowed upon the Believers. Each of God's soldiers got enough to live on for the rest of his life; Muhammad's Trove also became hugely richer. This enabled him to avoid looking to others for financing his future war efforts. Moreover, the capture of Khaybar brought a boon for him: in future the oasis of Khaybar would pay half of its annual produce to the Muslims, thereby affording them a permanent income for the first time in their lives.

While still residing in the midst of the vanquished Jews, Muhammad felt hungry and asked them to produce something for him to eat. They laid out the shoulder of a lamb. He took a mouthful, but on being told by the meat itself

of it having been poisoned, he spat it out before swallowing. A companion of his who had joined him in the feast, the story goes, died instantly after swallowing a morsel from the same meat. On his part, Muhammad attributed the agonies of illness he suffered for three years before his death to this Jewish assassination attempt, even though he had not swallowed a bit of the supposedly poisoned meat.

Some modern writers contend that the Jews were put to death upon their surrender to the Muslims, perhaps in reprisal for trying to poison Muhammad to death.

Upon completing the division of the spoils, Muhammad went on and, without a blow, took the possession of Wadi al Qura, a smaller nearby oasis also inhabited by the Jews. Many more expeditions followed under the able leadership of his disciples, all of whom proved immensely effective in bringing many of the rebellious tribes into the dominion of their leader.

Thus having consolidated his position either by persuasion, sword or deceit, Muhammad embarked upon spreading his sphere of influence in the territories beyond his domain. He sent envoys to various princes and potentates with invitation to embrace the faith of Islam. In effect, Muhammad's invitation sought from his invitees an acknowledgement that he was superior to them by virtue of his apostolic position. Of the numerous missions, only three merit mention in our concise narrative.

Muhammad sent two separate envoys to Khosru II, the king of Persia, and Heraclius, the Roman emperor at Constantinople. When Khosru received his letter, he flew into a rage and, tearing it into pieces, instantly ordered his viceroy in Yemen to restore this "madman of the tribe of Quraish" to

his senses. He strongly resented his audacity in asking him to renounce his ancestral religion in favor of Islam.

Heraclius received his call more favorably, due, probably, to current reverses in his fortune. He is said to have placed the epistle respectfully on his pillow and, showing due courtesy to the envoy, dismissed him with splendid presents.

Muhammad's third mission was to Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria. He was a clever man and knew well how to handle such a matter as the one he had on his hand. He received the envoy kindly and, after ascertaining from him Muhammad's likes and dislikes, he came to the conclusion that he enjoyed immensely the company of young and beautiful girls. The ruler, therefore, sent to him as presents two Coptic damsel sisters named Maria or Mary, and Shirin Qibtia, together with other precious gifts, intending to ward off potential danger to his country as well as to his rule. We shall have more to say about the two damsels in a separate chapter of our narrative.

LESSER PILGRIM AND THE BATTLE OF MUTA

Almost a year had elapsed since the pagans had prevented Muhammad from entering Mecca. According to the terms of the treaty he had entered into the previous year with his adversaries, however, he became entitled this time to visit the holy shrine in order to perform his pilgrimage together with his votaries. Accordingly, he departed Madina in 629 AD with a numerous and well-armed entourage, traveling with seventy camels for sacrifice at the altar of the idols, all of which were destined to be dislodged by Muhammad from their sanctuary the following year.

The Meccans, having heard of Muhammad and his party's impending arrival, retired to the neighboring hills, thereby

allowing the Muslims to an uninterrupted occasion to perform their religious obligations. The Muslims, too, on approaching the sacred grounds of the Ka'aba, laid aside their warlike trappings, excepting their swords which they carried sheathed.

Charged with great emotion and joy, Muslims entered the gates of the sacred grounds in the same pilgrim garb as their ancestors wore. Muhammad performed, with great zeal and devotion, all the ancient and customary pagan rites. He also circled the Ka'aba seven times; even though it still housed all the pagan deities he had launched his crusade against some twenty years ago.

The rites of the pilgrimage over, Muhammad retired to a place called Sarif, located a little distance from the sacred grounds of the Ka'aba, to perform a ceremony of a different kind. Here he was consummating his marriage with Maimuna, whom he had married while still wearing his *Ihram*, the pilgrimage garb. Ordinary Muslims are forbidden from marrying or having sexual intercourse in the state of *Ihram*, but this restriction did not apply to Muhammad, for he was a Prophet and was thus exempted from the observation of the laws which other mortals are compulsorily required to obey. His companions, not being in a position to question him on his conduct, joined him at this place at the conclusion of their own pilgrimage to return home, fully satisfied and contented with God, having, in course of their brief sojourn to Mecca, seen their leader adding up a new wife to his harem that he had set up in Madina for his pleasure.

Six months after the pilgrimage, Muhammad sent a letter to the governor of Basra in Syria, urging him to become a Muslim. On his way home, the bearer of the letter was killed,

perhaps by an Arab of the Christian tribe of Bani Ghassan. To avenge the death of his emissary, Muhammad prepared to send an army of three thousand soldiers against the offending tribe. The troops, under the command of his freed slave and adopted son Zaid, had orders to march rapidly in order to fall upon their enemy by surprise and to destroy it completely. Several other dedicated officers were made part of the mission in order to take over the command, if Zaid were killed in the ensuing foray.

As the Muslim forces set out, the tribe of Bani Ghassan picked up the news, and they, too, began to assemble a formidable force, some say of four or five thousand Arab tribesmen, to meet their adversaries head-on. While on march, Muslims learned of the superior pagan force and this caused them anxiety. They held a hastily called war council and, after a heated debate, Muslims decided to engage the enemy without regard to the outcome. They were convinced that if they won, they would benefit by the booty but if they fell, they would earn Paradise wherein they would dwell eternally in the arms of black-eyed virgin houris who had never been touched either by men or Jinns. In either case, they reasoned, they would be the gainers.

Both the troops met on a mountain ridge east of Moab. After an initial skirmish, Muslims withdrew to a village called Muta, where the opposing armies again came in contact with each other. A fierce battle ensued in which Zaid and his lieutenants were killed, creating panic in the rank and file of the Muslim army. In that critical moment, Khaled, a fierce pagan recently converted to the faith, took command and by his ploys led the enemy forces to believe that the Muslim army had received a massive reinforcement. An effective

illusion thus created, Khaled launched his attack, forcing the warriors of Bani Ghassan first to retreat and then to flee. They were overtaken in flight and decimated. The victors rampaged the enemy camp and found booty sufficient to satisfy the lust of each Muslim soldier. Their commander-in-chief and God also received their due share.

Some writers, Sir John Glubb being among them, tell us a different story. They say that Muslims were defeated in the battle, which incited such anger in the Muslims of Madina as to make them throw dirt at the army when it returned home.

Part - 11

THE CAPTURE OF MECCA

Muslims by this time had reached a stage where consecutive victories in their battles had given them great confidence, both in themselves and in their leader. They felt confident in facing any enemy who dared to challenge Muhammad's authority. He, on his part, felt no qualm in subduing any opponent, either by force of arms or by the sheer quality of his deceptive diplomacy. He, therefore, turned his attention to Mecca, his native city, from which he had so ignominiously escaped some eight years ago, and decided to take it over in order to restore it to the worship of one true God as well as to make it a rallying point of his religion.

Although he was prepared to implement his decision without delay, a term of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya that he had concluded two years ago proved to be an impediment. It provided for peace between the contracting parties for ten years. He began, therefore, to look for an opportunity that would help him achieve his goal. And the opportunity came his way, rather too soon.

One of the clauses of the treaty authorized both Muhammad and the Meccan Quraish was to sign treaties with any tribe that desired to join them for whatever reason. Such treaties, when concluded, meant that the tribes concerned became parties to the ten-year truce. On this basis, the Quraish had made a treaty with the tribe of Kinana, while Muhammad had done the same with the tribe of Khuzza.

It so happened that a clan of Kinana, known as Bani Baker, killed a man of the tribe of Khuzza in fulfillment of an old blood feud that had existed between them. As its consequence, sporadic clashes took place between the parties in which the Quraishites were alleged to have aided their ally, the tribe of Bani Kinana. It were the actions of the Quraish and Kinana which are claimed to have led Muhammad to conquer Mecca in order to punish, in particular, the Quraish people for their alleged violation of the treaty.

We believe that the charge levied against the Quraish and the tribe of Bani Kinana was spurious: it might have been concocted in order to support the Muslim claim that it were the Quraish and their ally, and not Muhammad, who had violated the terms of the treaty, forcing him to retaliate against them and to capture Mecca. At least, Abu Sofian's helpless approach to him and the ignominious treatment that he received from him supports our statement.

At any rate, Muhammad decided to take action against the tribe of Quraish and to take over Mecca to rid it of the 'nuisance' that the Quraish people had been creating ever since he had begun his mission of preaching Islam in this city.

The Quraishites by this time learned of the developments, relative to their welfare, that were taking place in Madina and decided to send Abu Sofian there to explain away the truth of

the matter to Muhammad, who in the meantime had become the emissary's son-in-law. Abu Sofian, accordingly, went to his house and wished to see his daughter, Umm Habiba, through whom he thought he could motivate his son-in-law to resolve the issue peacefully. He had come to the person he despised most for the reason the welfare of the Meccans was very dear to his heart. Snubbed by his daughter, Abu Sofian went to Muhammad directly, but he refused to talk to him. He felt humiliated, yet he continued his efforts. Finding no easy way to present his case to Muhammad, he sought the intercession of Abu Baker, Ali and Omar. But all of them rebuked him and refused to help. Eventually, conceding defeat, he mounted his camel and trekked back to Mecca with a heavy heart.

Scarcely had Abu Sofian left Madina when Muhammad issued orders for all to prepare for a march on Mecca. He also summoned his allies from all quarters to join him in the foray. He had all routes leading to Mecca blocked to prevent any information on his impending march from being carried to the Meccans.

Muhammad departed for Mecca in 630 A.D. with ten thousand men at his command. They reached the valley near the sacred city and pitched tents in the darkness of night to avoid detection by their enemy. Abu Sofian somehow came to know about the arrival of the invading army and reached out to meet Muhammad at his campsite. However, a scouting party seized him and delivered him to its Commander-in-chief. Seeing his inveterate enemy within his reach, Muhammad felt immensely delighted, but he set Sofian free when he embraced Islam and acknowledged him as the Prophet of God.

Abu Sofian, now a Muslim, obtained favorable terms from Muhammad for the people of Mecca. One such term provided that none [no Meccans] were to be hurt should they remain quietly in their homes or take refuge in the house of Abu Sofian. Returning to Mecca, Abu Sofian assembled his people and told them of the massiveness of Muhammad's army that had assembled at their doorsteps, not only to take over their city, but also to annihilate its entire population. He also told them about his covenant with Muhammad and asked them either to stay indoors or to take refuge in his house. His words had the desired effect on the people, and the majority agreed to witness the entry of their conqueror into the city without offering any resistance.

The following morning at sunrise, Muhammad approached the sacred grounds, seated on his camel and reciting verses from his compositions. With reverence he rode to the holy shrine of Ka'aba, circling it seven times. The Ka'aba still housed all the pagan idols and deities within and without its vicinity.

Next Muhammad ordered the doors of the shrine to be opened, and proceeded to destroy all the idols and deities around which he had circumambulated with veneration a while ago. All the idols and deities were thrown out and destroyed nevertheless. The shrine's inside walls, covered with pictures of other pagan deities, also displayed the icon of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus and a painting of an old man, thought to be Abraham who, Muhammad believed, was the original founder of Islam. Placing only these two images under his protection, he ordered Othman, his son-in-law, to destroy all the others.

While Muhammad was busy destroying the idols of Mecca, he sent Khalid to Nakhla to demolish the temple of al-Uzza, which was one of the three eminent shrines of paganism in Arabia. At the news of his approach, the guardian of the temple hung his sword on the statue of the goddess and called upon her to defend herself from the wrath of the destroyer. When Khalid had razed the temple and its idol to the ground, he saw a black woman, entirely naked, with long and wildly flowing hair, emerging from the debris of the ruins. He instantly recognized the figure to be of al-Uzza herself; and drawing out his sword, he cut her into pieces.

Muhammad, after destroying the pagan idols, declared the shrine of Ka'aba purified: a suitable object of pilgrimage that is to be revered so long as the religion of Islam should continue to motivate its adherents to perform all of their religious rites. It is, in fact, a liturgy that was borrowed from the Jews and pagans in order to give Islam an appearance of completeness in respect to various dogmas that every Muslim is required to follow in his or her daily life.

After the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad directed his military commanders to various destinations to spread his religion, at the point of sword, if necessary. While the campaign of proselytization was being pursued, some tribes of mountains united together to check the growing power of Islam and its founder, which was threatening their existence. Placing the general command of the united force in the hands of one of their own, the chiefs of the component tribes agreed to assemble at the valley of Autas, between Honein and Taif, to launch their attack on the Muslims. In order to ensure their adhesion to the cause, the participating members of the troop

were asked to bring along their women, children and cattle to the site of assembly. Four thousand of them came as directed, their number and belongings crowding the camp. Unwittingly, the Bedouins turned their camps into a tempting target for the predatory forces of Islam.

As in the past, Muhammad learned about the preparation of the tribes and decided to storm them with his force of approximately twelve thousand men, who were ever willing to perform any task as long as it offered them booty, or in the event of death, Paradise.

Mounting his favorite white mule, *Duldul*, given him as gift by Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria, along with two sisters, Muhammad led his forces into the mountains. While moving forward to the enemy camp, he came to a deep valley in the confines of Honein. As the Muslim forces were pouring into the valley, men from the opposing forces suddenly sprang out from the hills on both sides and charged down on the unsuspecting Muslim forces.

Struck with a sudden panic, Muslims turned and fled. When all seemed lost, al Abbas - Muhammad's uncle - known to have strong lungs, put up a shout that echoed through the narrow valley. Hearing the voice of al-Abbas, the fugitives rallied and immersed themselves into a bloody battle. The three-to-one superiority that the Muslim forces enjoyed began to show its effect when the infidels were first brought to a halt and then driven back; finally they broke and fled. The chiefs of the fleeing troops and some of their accomplices took shelter in the city of Taif, while others retreated to their camps in the valley of Autas. Muslims won the battle because, as the Quran says, God helped them with his invisible soldiers, without whom they could not have achieved their victory.

Muhammad stayed in the valley, dispatching some of his lieutenants with a strong force to take over the enemy's camps. After a fierce fighting, the Muslims won. The capture of the camps furnished the victors with great booty, consisting -as the Arabian writers say- of twenty four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep, four thousand ounces of silver, and six thousand captives, most of them young females.

At this period in time, some of the Muslim soldiers became concerned with a moral question that pricked their conscience, even though they had the reputation of committing lewdness at whim. They asked Muhammad how they could have sex with those captive women who were married and had their husbands in confinement elsewhere, without committing the sin of adultery.

Muhammad had no answer. As he had been doing all along in his difficult moments, he produced a declaration, in the name of God, the contents of which squelched their moral scruples. It forbade Muslims from having sex with free married women, but permitted, nay, encouraged them to indulge in the act with those women who become captives of the wars. This decree from God was good at the time it came; it still remains valid for the Muslims who have permission from heaven to enslave their enemies in the wars and to have sex with their female captives without any moral qualm.

The moral issue thus solved and the safekeeping of captives and booty ensured, Muhammad set out in pursuit of the fugitive chiefs who had taken shelter in the city of Taif. The sight of the city brought to his memory the insult with which its people had once humiliated him together with the expulsion that he had suffered at their hands. He felt himself

overtaken by a sentiment of vengeance, which forced him to storm the city, but its strong protective walls prevented him from achieving his goal easily. The defenders of the city put up a strong resistance to Muhammad's fierce attack in which he used, for the first time, catapults devised by the genius Salman al-Farsi. The fierce forces failing to flush out the beleaguered pagans from within the walls, Muhammad decided to lay siege to the city.

To compel the besieged enemy to surrender, Muhammad laid waste their fields, orchards, and vineyards. At the same time, he declared freedom to all slaves who would desert the city. His efforts, however, bore him no fruit and he was disappointed.

The siege, nonetheless, continued for twenty days, during which Muhammad spent most of his time in prayers and between the tents of his two wives to whom it had fallen by lot to accompany him in this campaign. His prayers, however, failed to induce intervention from heaven, and in spite of his all efforts, he could not take over Taif through force.

Muhammad's patience finally ran out and he broke the siege, promising his troops to renew his efforts at a future date. Journeying to the place called Jirana, where the spoils and the captives from his previous expedition had been deposited, he distributed the spoils and the captives among his soldiers, retaining one fifth for him and God. Dictated, however, by political expediency, Muhammad is reported to have restored his share subsequently to its original owners.

From the camp at Jirana, Muhammad rode into Mecca and again performed his lesser pilgrimage. This accomplished, he returned to Madina, leaving the affairs of Mecca in the hands of his appointed governor.

Muhammad remained in Madina for seven months, during which time he witnessed the death of his daughter Zainab and the birth of a son, named Ibrahim, from his Coptic slave girl, Maria Qibtia. He had placed high hopes in this child, but to his dismay, the infant died at the age of fifteen months.

From the time of his flight to Madina in 622 A.D. until his death in 632 A.D., Muhammad is said to have launched thirty-eight expeditions and raids against the Jews and the pagans; twenty-seven of them he personally led. The raids undertaken by him, together with the capture of Mecca, spread his fame - either as a Prophet or a conqueror - to the outermost parts of Arabia. Consequently, envoys from distant tribes began to pour into Madina, some acknowledging him as a Prophet and embracing Islam, others submitting to him as a temporal sovereign and agreeing to pay him tribute in lieu of converting themselves to his faith.

While the proselytization was continuing at a rapid pace and tribe after tribe of the Arabs was pledging its allegiance to Muhammad, the defiant fugitives who had taken shelter behind the walls of Taif persisted in their worship of the idol of *al-Lat*, believing it to be one of the three daughters of God. But, though safe within the walls, the pagans found themselves gradually driven into confinement and isolation by the Muslims. Ultimately, they found themselves compelled to send their ambassadors to Muhammad, entreating him for a pact of peace. He was delighted by their approach, but because of the resentment he harbored against the people of Taif, he declined to give them any concession and insisted on their unqualified submission and conversion. Finding themselves completely at his mercy, they bowed down to his

demands, and impulsively embraced Islam in order to save themselves from certain death and destruction.

By this time, Muhammad had become a sovereign of nearly all of Arabia, joining the former warring tribes together in the bond of Islam. His apostolic role gave him absolute authority and a formidable power that flourished unchecked in the inhospitable atmosphere of the desert. He exercised complete control over the minds and bodies of the people who converted to his faith, seducing them to his following by the prospect of booty in this world and by the promise of Paradise in the next. Had Muhammad not assumed the role of a prophet, and promised people the bliss of the world hereafter, he might not have succeeded in the mission that he had set for himself, and to earn for him a place in history for doing what he did in the name of God.

With various allurements that he offered to his followers, Muhammad was able to raise, by this time, such a level of ecstasy in them where they could be engaged in any struggle that would engender power to him by any means -be it conversion or subjugation of his adversaries through the use of force. Thus prepared, he issued orders, perhaps in October of 630 A.D, to assemble a force for an expedition to the **Byzantine** frontier. But, in spite of most of the people's absolute loyalty to him, his call to take up arms this time failed to evoke much enthusiasm in his warriors, for they still remembered the havoc that they faced at the battle of Muta.

Another reason for their malingering was the season of summer heat: the earth was parched and the springs and brooks were dried up. Yet another factor that prevented the people from responding to Muhammad's call was the date-harvesting time, which would arrive when they were gone on

their campaign. This they could not do, for date was their staple food and they needed to stay home to gather the fruit at the proper time.

Abdullah Ibn Ubay, who still remained Muhammad's covert enemy, vowed to seize every occasion to counteract his plans, it is alleged, artfully planted all those objections in the people's mind. He is also believed to have urged the people not to take part in his war efforts by putting forward myriad causes to which they responded favorably, resulting in a series of setbacks to Muhammad's call to arms.

As it had been his wont, Muhammad resorted to revelation and produced one which told the unwilling people of Madina of the fierceness of the fire of hell where they would be burning if they avoided taking part in the raid on the pretext of the summer heat. The revelation had its desired effect, and many of his devotees responded to his call by delivering to him large sums of money and other valuables, in lieu of their own participation, to enable him to finance his expedition against the Greeks.

Abdullah's alleged intrigues notwithstanding, Muhammad succeeded in gathering an army of ten thousand horsemen and twenty thousand foot soldiers, both from Madina and the settlements of the dessert, to march on a momentous mission. Appointing Ali the caretaker of Madina, he left the city with his army and pitched a camp at Farewell Pass, a defile just north of Madina, where expeditions traditionally assembled before setting out for Syria. Abdullah Ibn Ubay, followed by his adherents, accompanied Muhammad's convoy, but set up his tent at some distance in the rear of the main army. When Muhammad marched forward in the morning, Abdullah first lagged behind and then led his troops back to Madina.

Undeterred by Abdullah's defection, the Muslim expeditionary army continued the journey toward its destination, braving all difficulties of the desert and the discomforts caused by the sultry heat. At last, the stolid convoy reached **Tabuk**, a small town within the confines of the Roman Empire, about half way between Madina and Damascus. Here, the Commander-in-chief ordered a halt. He pitched his tents near a fountain, and having refreshed, he dispatched his lieutenants to various principalities either to enforce Islam or to exact tribute. Some of the princes either acknowledged the divinity of Muhammad's mission or submitted to his temporal dominion. Those who dared to defy were made to obey by force.

When the army brought some neighboring territories into subjection, Muhammad wished to reach into the heart of Syria to accomplish the main object of his campaign. While he was making the preparations, he received intelligence on the preparedness of a massive Greek force and its assembly at the border to confront his forces. The report disheartened his troops, which forced Muhammad to go back to Madina without realizing his ardent desire.

Soon after Muhammad's return to Madina, Abdullah Ibn Ubay, his long time enemy and "*the Chief of the Hypocrites*" as Muhammad named him, fell sick and died. Muhammad followed his dead body to the grave and prayed to God for the forgiveness of his sins. On being remonstrated by Omar for praying for a hypocrite, Muhammad is quoted to have answered him in the following words:

"It does not matter if you pray for a hypocrite or not. If you pray all day and all night, and the man is a hypocrite, God knows it and will not forgive him".

Muhammad's statement, if true, carried in itself a hypocritical implication. He knew that God does not forgive a hypocrite, yet he prayed for Abdullah's salvation to display his concern for the welfare of the deceased in the world hereafter. He intended his display of piety to act as an olive branch for those who knew that he was a ruthless person; its enactment, especially, designed to soften their attitude.

While Muhammad kept himself busy with public and his domestic affairs, the sacred month of yearly pilgrimage knocked at the door. He sent, therefore, a large contingent of Madinese pilgrims to Mecca under the leadership of *Abdullah Athek Ibn Abu Qahafa*, popularly known by the appellation of Abu Bakr.

Soon after the departure of the delegation, Muhammad decided to announce an important message to the large congregation of pilgrims who had gathered at Mecca in order to ensure its wide circulation. Accordingly, he summoned Ali, his son-in-law, and asked him to hasten with all speed to Mecca, so as to reach there before the pilgrims departed upon completion of their pilgrimage. Ali mounted the fastest dromedary and reached Mecca before the pilgrims could disperse. He stood up before the assembled multitude and read out the announcement, of which he was the bearer and through which *Muhammad declared Islam, in all its vigor, to be the religion of the sword.*

According to the announcement, Muhammad would be free -after the expiration of a four-month period- of all responsibility toward the idolaters, whom he would attack, kill and plunder wherever met. The ties of blood and friendship alike were to be discarded: the believers barred from holding communion with their nearest relatives and

dearest friends unless the infidels renounced their idolatry. The announcement further required that no unbeliever to be permitted to tread the sacred grounds of Mecca, or to enter the temple of God -- a prohibition that continues to remain in force even to the present day.

When the returning pilgrims spread the news that Muhammad declared war with the intention of killing all polytheists, the remaining tribes of the infidels became alarmed and began to throng the gates of Madina with the sole purpose of converting themselves to Islam. Envoys also started pouring in from distant tribes and potentates, some submitting to his apostolic mission, others to his temporal authority. To those tribes of the idolaters who still remained outside Muhammad's domain, he sent his captains to subdue them and to bring them to the fold of Islam or to make them agree to pay tribute. All of his gallant soldiers performed their duties, in a short time, to his entire satisfaction.

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

His sway established over the whole of Arabia and part of the Yemen, Muhammad decided to perform his pilgrimage or *hajj* at the holy temple of Mecca; accordingly, one day he declared his wish to his followers. The announcement of his intention brought to Madina devotees from all parts of Arabia to follow him on his pilgrimage. One day, some say on the *20th of February, 632 A.D.*, Muhammad, accompanied this time by his nine wives, set out from Madina for Mecca, surrounded by an immense crowd of the faithfuls, some on foot and some mounted on camels, extended as far as eye could see in every direction. They journeyed some two hundred and fifty miles in the fervid heat of the desert, ultimately reaching the House of God to perform the antiquated rites, sans the idols of the

past. As this was to be a model pilgrimage, Muhammad is believed to have observed rigorously all the ancient rites that his ancestors perpetuated, including those which he himself established. Because he was in a frail health, he performed the seven circuits around the Ka'aba and the concomitant journeys between the hills of Safa and Marwa, riding on the back of his camel.

The rites of hajj completed, Muhammad sacrificed sixty-three camels with his own hand, one for each year of his age, and then he shaved his head. The shorn locks were divided among his disciples, one of which found its way to the valleys of Kashmir in India, where it is even now preserved in absolute reverence as a sacred relic of Muhammad.

During his sojourn in Mecca, he preached frequently. In course of this activity, he is said to have laid down many doctrines of his faith which he had neglected to mention earlier. He is also believed to have given numerous guidelines to his followers, many of which they failed to mention to the scribes when the latter were compiling the Quran. Consequently, Muslims observe many important rituals of their faith based not on the Quran, but on the practice that they happen to know or learn from their parents or mentors.

His Farewell Pilgrimage completed, Muhammad returned to Madina, never to see Mecca again.

Before concluding our presentation of Muhammad's life, we will like to examine his conjugal life in order to complete our narrative. Without this examination, we feel Muhammad's biography, whatever its length, will remain incomplete.

SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES

A saying in the East says: *There is a woman behind every successful man.* The word “woman” denotes strictly a “woman,” and not a “wife”. It could also mean a mother, a sister or a daughter. But the word "woman" mentioned in the saying does not mean either of them; it means a woman who has a relationship with a man without getting married. Moreover, the saying does not apply to the monogamous men, many among whom attained stellar successes with the encouragement, help and cooperation of their mothers and wives.

Technically speaking, a promiscuous man may have a number of wives, but a husband traditionally bestows the status of wifehood only on a single woman. By doing so, the husband divides the role of his women in two categories: one that of a wife, who is required to bear children for him and to look after his household affairs. The other role that he allots to his girlfriends, paramours or concubines does not normally require them to do what he has already allotted to his wife.

Most promiscuous men who do not own a number of wives may, instead, possess a number of girl friends or concubines. Technically speaking again, men tend to have much less responsibility towards their girl friends or concubines than they have towards their "contracted" wives. Because men do not normally feel fully committed to their girlfriends or concubines, they naturally feel more relaxed in their company. Their meetings take place in congenial atmosphere where the usual and regular household concerns do not interrupt their pleasures. Because most men do not like their girlfriends or concubines to bear their children, their encounters remain free from discussions that generally occur

in situations where men have children from their wives. Consequently, many men prefer the company of their girlfriends or concubines to that of their wives.

There is another group of men who marry a large number of women to meet their political needs. This is what at least one historical fact points to. Emperor Akbar is said to have married no less than 5,000 women (according to CNN, the number was between 900-1000 women) from different Indian communities in order to foster his relationships with the communities his wives came from. The policy of marrying women from different segments of the society proved very successful for Akbar; he ruled India longer, and more effectively, than any other Mogul emperors.

There is a third group of men who possess a number of women -as wives, girlfriends or concubines- to satisfy, among others, one of their psychological deficiencies. Those men lacked patting in their childhood, especially, from their mothers, to recoup which, they collect around them a large number of women to get patted, without which, modern scientific finding tells us, many such men may feel greatly disadvantaged in their lives.

The fourth group of men takes a number of women as wives or concubines to fulfill their sadistic inclinations. They derive pleasure from tormenting women sexually, physically, and financially. Sexual torment consists not only of overindulgence in sexual activities; it also consists of denying women their sexual pleasures as well as the pleasure of motherhood.

Muhammad was one such person whose mother abandoned him when he was five years old. The women of the families in whose households he spent his childhood and

youth not only did not give him love, they also mistreated him on account of his misfortunes.

Having discussed briefly the probable causes that force a man to take a multiple of women as wives, girlfriends or concubines, we will now revert to Muhammad's conjugal life. We are indulging in this exercise with a view to determining why he took so many wives, why he treated them so badly and also why he issued those commandments which were intended to degrade and injure women. Our discussion on Muhammad's conjugal life is based on information that we gathered from his biographies, written by Muslim as well as by the non-Muslim writers.

According to some of his biographers, the number of wives that Muhammad took cannot be determined with certainty. Some conservative writers limit it to fifteen, though some make it as many as twenty-five (Washington Irving, op. cit. p. 197). Ali Dashti, an Iranian scholar of our time, named twenty-one women, who he says were Muhammad's wives (*Twenty-three Years*, pp. 123 to 125).

Part - 12

Muhammad's first wife, **Khadija** died in 619 A.D. He took his second wife in 620 A.D., when he was fifty. He married his last wife two years before his death in 632 A.D.

SECOND WIFE

After returning from Taif to Mecca, Muhammad married **Sawda**. As we have mentioned earlier, Muhammad was facing acute financial hardships after the death of his wife. He desperately needed someone to help him survive until he found a permanent solution to his economic difficulties.

Sawda was a widow of Sokran, who had left behind some wealth for her to live on the rest of her life. She was neither young nor beautiful. On top of it, she was very tall for a woman and also had an excessively corpulent physique. Her physical shortcomings notwithstanding, Muhammad went ahead and married her due, perhaps, to the following considerations:

1. Having lost his ability to engage himself in penile intercourse with woman, Sauda's age, physique and ugliness, at that crucial time of his life, had become irrelevant to Muhammad;

2. All that he wanted from her was her wealth.

His purpose served, Muhammad announced his intention to expel her from his house. Faced with grim prospects of starving and dying on the street, she implored him not to proceed with his plan, pledging at the same time that she would not divulge to anyone the state of his sex life. Satisfied with the bargain, he allowed her to live in his household for so long as she lived.

THIRD WIFE

Aisha was the daughter of *Abdullah Ibn Abu Qahafa*, popularly known as Abu Bakr, *Father of the virgin she-camel*, an appellation people gave him after he gave his child in marriage to a fifty-plus year old Muhammad. Being a friend of Abu Bakr, Muhammad had the privilege to visit his house anytime he wished. In course of those visits, child Aisha became accustomed to him, whose presence gave her delight and brought her "something of the joy of the Paradise." In his "miraculous touch, the sensation of joy," she narrated later, "was even tangible" (Martin Lings, op. cit. p. 133).

We believe that during his frequent visits to Abu Bakr's house, Muhammad developed a sexual relationship with his daughter Aisha. For doing it, he, at first, made use of his fearsome character to control the child's mind. Gradually, herself overtaken by the "sensation of joy" that his "touch" gave her, and also prevented by his order not to let anyone know what he had been doing to her, she refrained all along from divulging the secret to others. Her parents might have recognized what had been going on between her and Muhammad, and they might also have made her confess the truth to them, but his strong influence over them as well as their own future plan prevented them from taking any action against their child's molester.

Over a period of time, Muhammad became fully infatuated with the child due to the fact that he could "play with her and she with him." This confession on Muhammad's part led some writers to confirm that he had a physical relationship with Aisha before he married her (See Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam*, p. 54). Fed up with the secrecy with which he had been satisfying his lascivious nature, he decided to marry the six-year old child.

The Arabian traditions permitted child marriages, but the marriage of a six-year old child with a fifty-plus year old man was not common. With a view to overcoming people's criticism, Muhammad came up with a brilliant idea. It was a dream that he made use of to justify his otherwise unpardonable marriage with a child.

One day he told everyone that he had a dream in which he saw a man carrying someone wrapped in a piece of silk. The man said to Muhammad, "*This is thy wife; so uncover her.*" He lifted the silk and, lo! There was Aisha. Inadvertently, the

narrator of the dream left for us a clue that indicates Aisha's real age at the time Muhammad had developed for her his sexual infatuation: A man would ordinarily carry an infant, wrapped up in a piece of silk or cloth, and not a grown up child who is able to walk.

He interpreted the dream to be a divine command for him to marry the child. In compliance, he betrothed her when she was a six-year old child. The betrothal removed the difficulty that he faced hitherto in engaging the child in acts that gratified his sexual fantasies.

Following the betrothal, Muhammad's non-penile sexual relationship with Aisha continued for over two years. It had a brief break when he migrated to Medina. Within a year of his arrival there, Aisha also moved to Medina along with her family members. Soon after her arrival, Muhammad formalized his marriage, and took Aisha to his house. Aisha was nine and her husband fifty-three years old.

The young age of the bride notwithstanding, Muslim writers maintain that Muhammad had married Aisha because she was clever and learned (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, op. cit, vol. 2, p. 1113). He had judged her qualities with his prophetic eyes. After being convinced by her extraordinary qualities, he decided that he should marry her first, and then equip her with his teachings, which he expected her to relate to the posterity after his death. *Because Muhammad had reposed his complete trust in her, she is universally referred to as Ummul Momenin, the mother of the Muslims.* Most Muslim theologians, scholars as well as their ordinary cotemporaries consider her to be an authority not only on hadiths, but also on the details of her husband's entire life.

Not knowing what level of learnedness a nine year old child could have acquired in an environment in which facilities for imparting education did not at all exist, we assert that what we have stated in the foregoing paragraphs of this presentation was the reason for which Muhammad married Aisha at such a young age. It was all about fulfilling his sexual lasciviousness. Her presumed intelligence and learnedness played no role whatsoever in the marriage.

After she had grown up, Aisha, we believe, resented not only her childhood marriage with Muhammad; she also hated him for not being able to satisfy her sexual needs. The fact that she supported Hafsa in her confrontation with Muhammad on a supposedly sex-related dispute lends credence to our theory (66:4). She stood on Hafsa's side to vent her anger at what he had done to her in her childhood, as well as for what she was going through then in her sex life.

For so long as Muhammad and other fearful stalwarts of Islam lived, she dared not revolt against all those who supported all the misdeeds of her husband. Ali's assumption of power of the Caliph gave her the chance. She revolted against him, and fought a pitched battle against the Muslim forces. Though she was defeated, she is believed to have caused more trouble among the Muslims than all the pagan Quraishites combined together (cf. R. V. C. Bodley, *op. cit.* p. 147).

Readers would be confused by our above assertions. With a view to putting their perplexity to rest, we need to mention the following historical fact:

Muhammad had six children from Khadija. Three of them were male and they died in their infancy. Subsequent to Khadija's death, he took at least ten wives. Almost all of them

were in their childbearing ages. Despite this fact, none of them bore him a child. In our judgment, it was his impotency that had prevented his wives from conceiving, and enjoying the pleasures of motherhood.

Muhammad's sexual impotency has always remained a well-guarded secret. To prevent it from ever becoming a public scandal, he forbade his followers from marrying his wives even after his death. His sycophantic followers buried his embarrassing condition forever by including his slave-girls and concubines in the same prohibition (cf. Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Quranul Karim*, p. 1088-9).

As far as the question of his having a son from Maria Qibtia is concerned, we will dwell on this issue later in our sub-chapter titled, "Concubines."

FOURTH WIFE

Hafsah was the daughter of Omar, an intimate friend and a close confidant of Muhammad. Her father became the second Caliph of Islam after the death of Abu Bakr.

Hafsah was married to Kunays but became a widow when she was eighteen years old. Her father offered her in marriage to Othman, the widowed son-in-law of Muhammad, but he refused. She was then offered to Muhammad's father-in-law, Abu Bakr, who answered the request in an evasive manner that hurt Omar's pride.

Finding no willing groom, Omar went to Muhammad to seek his advice as well as to vent his anger at Uthman and Abu Baker. Counseling patience, he told him (Omar) that he would give him a better son-in-law than Othman, and give Othman a better father-in-law than him.

Sometime later, Muhammad gave his daughter Umm Kulthum in marriage to Othman, and he himself married Hafsah, thus fulfilling the promise he gave Omar some time ago.

Afterwards, Abu Bakr explained his evasiveness to Omar by divulging the secret: Muhammad himself harbored the wish to marry Hafsah; therefore, he had to be evasive when Omar asked him to marry his daughter. Had Abu Bakr accepted his offer, it would have upset Muhammad, who, in his turn, would have destroyed him and his future.

FIFTH WIFE

Zainab was the daughter of Khuzaima and was married to Ubayda. She had become a widow when her husband was killed in the battle of Badr (Some say it was the battle of Uhud). She was rich and had a generous disposition. Her generosity had earned her the title of "the mother of the poor." She died a few years after the marriage.

Muslims claim that Muhammad had married Hafsah because her husband had been killed in a battle, and she needed a man to look after her. To us, it does not appear to be an honest explanation of what must have tempted Muhammad to marry her. Let us explore:

Eight Muslim men had died in the battle of Badr. We do not believe that all of them were married. Even if we accept, for argument's sake, that some of them had wives, in that event, we may assume that there were more than one woman whose husbands had been killed in the battle. Muhammad married one; what happened to the remaining widows and who took care of them, remains shrouded in silence. We have nothing in the Islamic history that tells us that apart from Muhammad, other Muslim stalwarts had married and given

shelter to other women who had lost their husbands in the battle of Badr or in the battle of Uhud.

In the battle of Uhud, sixty-five Muslims were killed. Hamza, one of Muhammad's uncles, was among the dead. History does not tell us that either Muhammad or any of his Companions had married any number of widows, left behind by their dead husbands.

The facts, narrated in the above two paragraphs, prove convincingly that Muhammad had married Zainab either for her wealth or for her youth and beauty. His alleged piety had played no role in any of his marriages.

SIXTH WIFE

Umm Salama, whose real name was *Hind*, was the daughter of Abu Ummaya. She had a son by the name of Salama, hence the appellation of Umm Salama. Four months after her husband's death, Muhammad asked her to marry him. Despite the fact that she was no more than twenty-eight years old at the time, she declined the proposal on the ground that she was too old for him and that she had a jealous nature which would disrupt his conjugal life. Muhammad had, at this time, a number of wives and slave girls at his disposal.

Umm Salama married Muhammad after he assured her that her age was not a factor and that he would have her jealous nature cured by God soon after their union. History, however, does not tell us if she was ever cured of her jealousy or not.

SEVENTH WIFE

Zainab, the daughter of Jahsh, was a young and beautiful girl, coming from a respectable family of Quraish. She was a virgin cousin of Muhammad.

Muhammad wanted to marry her, and he might also have proposed to her. Perhaps, after being rebuffed, he vowed to avenge the insult at any cost. To fulfill his vow, he designed a trap to escape from which she would have no route.

Zaid, a freed slave and adopted son of Muhammad, was married to Umm Ayman and they were leading a happy life with their son, Ayman. Muhammad decided to turn Zaid into a pawn in a game that he had devised to bring his passion, Zainab, to his harem.

Knowing that the aristocratic men of Mecca did not marry the former wives of their slaves, Muhammad proposed to Umimah bint Abdul Muttalib, Zainab's mother, that she let Zaid marry her daughter. She and Abdullah, her son, declined the proposal (Maulana Muhammad Nazimuddin, *Quran Majid*, p. 612) on the round that Zaid was a former slave; and also that he was ugly to look at. Undaunted, Muhammad produced a revelation, in the name of God, which required Zainab's mother and brother to submit to his wish. The revelation read:

"It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by God and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys God and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path" (33:36)

Frightened by Muhammad's potent determination, the family gave in, and Zainab became Zaid's second wife. Soon afterwards, Zaid realized that his adoptive father nurtured a tremendous lust for Zainab and that he was dying to have sex with her. Knowing that his refusal to please Muhammad could cost him his life, he volunteered to divorce Zainab so that he could fulfill with her his heart's desire.

Muhammad was delighted at the prospect of having Zainab in his grip, but an age-old pagan custom doused his sadistic plans; they [pagans] believed it was unethical and also a sin for an adoptive father to marry his adopted son's divorced wife. Fearing a storm that his marriage with Zainab was going to create, he advised Zaid to retain her in his marriage until such time he was able to find a solution to the problem.

He tried but found no solution. Unable to control his passion for Zainab any longer, he decreed, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men," . . . (33:40), thus paving the way for him to have his adopted son's divorced wife in his bed. Zaid heard the decree, and while he was on the way to his home to divorce Zainab, "the power of Revelation overwhelmed him." When he came to himself, his first words were: "Who will go unto Zainab and tell her the good tidings that God hath given her to me in marriage, even from Haven?" (Martin Lings, *op. cit.* p. 213)

Zaid wasted no time in pronouncing "I divorce thee," perhaps, three times. The divorce formality over, he handed over his former wife to Muhammad. Claiming that his marriage with her had already been contracted in heaven (33:37: "We have joined in marriage to thee"), the best man among all mankind took her, without bothering for a formal marriage, to his quarters for inflicting on her all sadistic tortures that he could conceive of. Thus, in the manner we have described, Muhammad fulfilled his vow of revenge on Zainab, which he had taken when she rejected his marriage proposal.

The divorce formality that we say Zaid had followed needs some clarification. Traditionally, a Muslim husband is

required to pronounce the words of divorce three times over a period of time. Thereafter, the divorcee needs to wait for a term of three months (2:228) in order to make sure she was not pregnant at the time of her divorce. Only after completion of the waiting term can a divorcee contract a new marriage. Conversely, a widow has to wait for four months and ten days (2:234) to clear up the question of her pregnancy vis a vis a divorcee who is required to wait for just three months to achieve the same result.

Contiguous nature of verses 33:36-37 gives us the impression that immediately after Zaid's marriage with Zainab, Muhammad made it clear to him that he wanted his wife to be his bed partner. His announcement forced Zaid to avoid a physical contact with his wife. Since there was no possibility for Zainab to become pregnant and as her marriage with Muhammad had already been contracted in heaven, we believe, Zaid took a shortcut in divorcing his wife. He did not divorce Zainab in the traditional manner, for doing that would have delayed Zainab's availability to Muhammad. Having seen him react against those people who failed to measure up to his expectation, Zaid knew any delay on his part would bring him a serious problem from his highly enraged mentor. Zaid must have hastened the divorce to save himself from Muhammad's wrath.

Zainab's procurement gave Muhammad immense pleasure and happiness. To celebrate his victory, he threw a grand party to which he invited all the people of Medina. Interestingly, this was the only party, related to his marriage, which has found a place in the pages of the Quran (33:53).

EIGHTH WIFE

Juwairiyah, also known as *Barra*, had become a captive in the hands of the Muslims. She belonged to the clan of Bani Mustalik. A woman of great beauty, she fell to the lot of a Helper from Medina who, not appreciating her beauty, fixed a high ransom for her freedom. Muhammad learned of her predicament and, being highly charmed by her beauty, paid the ransom himself and took her as his wife.

NINETH WIFE

Umm Habiba was the daughter of Abu Sofian, Muhammad's uncle and his inveterate foe. She was married to her cousin, Ubayd Allah Ibn Jahsh. While in Abyssinia, Ubayd had reverted back to Christianity and died. The widow remained a Muslim.

Once she saw a dream in which someone addressed her as the "mother of the faithful," which she interpreted to mean that she would marry her cousin. After her marriage with Muhammad, Abu Sofian, her father, is reported to have remarked: *"By heaven, this camel is so rampant that no muzzle can restrain him."*

TENTH WIFE

Safiya, a Jew of great beauty, belonged to the tribe of Khaybar. She was married to Kinana when she was seventeen years old. A few months after her marriage, Muhammad reached Khaybar on an expedition against her tribe. At this time, Safiya had a dream. She saw a brilliant moon hanging in the sky and knew that beneath it lay the city of Madina. Then the moon began to move toward Khaybar, where it fell into her lap. When she woke up, and told her husband what she had seen in her sleep, he struck her a blow in the face and

said, "This can only mean that thou desirest the King of the Hijaz, Muhammad."

After the fall of Khaybar to the Muslims, Safiya's husband was beheaded, and she was brought to Muhammad as a captive, still bearing on her face the mark of the blow. He asked her the cause of the injury and she told him the story of her dream. Flattered, he took her as one of his wives. Their nuptials took place while the remains of the bride's murdered husband awaited a burial.

ELEVENTH WIFE

Maimuna was a widow. Her full sister, Umm al-Fadl, was married to Muhammad's uncle al Abbas. The uncle offered his sister-in-law in marriage to his nephew when he came to Mecca to perform his lesser pilgrimage about two years before his death. He accepted the offer and married Maimuna while still wearing the pilgrim's *ihram*. (Bukhari, Hadith 49, Book 62, Vol. 7). He consummated the marriage at Sarif, a few miles outside of Mecca. Ordinary Muslims are not permitted to marry while wearing their *ihram*.

TWELFTH WIFE

Esma was the sister of a princely desert chief of Najd. She was given in marriage to Muhammad in order to protect his estate from being taken over forcibly by the King of Hijaz.

Realizing his sexual incapability, she left him the night they were married. Muslim Apologists narrated the incident with a twist. They tell us that as she was young and very beautiful, Aisha and Hafsa developed in them a sense of insecurity, fearing that Esma's youthfulness and beauty might force Muhammad to pay her more attention than he was in the habit of paying them. Consequently, they hatched a

conspiracy in order to prevent their husband from approaching her sexually. Their plan worked well and Esma forestalled all attempts to engage her in a sexual act on the night she joined his harem. Her persistent refusal to copulate infuriated Muhammad. He divorced her without consummating the marriage (R.V. C. Bodley, op. cit. p. 266).

Maxime Rodinson speaks of another wife whom Muhammad divorced on the ground that she, too, had denied him sexual access.

According to many of Muhammad's biographers, only nine of his wives ever lived together in the quarters that he had built around the *Mosque of the Prophet* in Madina. These quarters also housed an unknown number of slave-girls. They catered to all needs, which included sexual intercourse of their master. For them to deny him sexual pleasures would have been tantamount to displeasing God thereby earning for them a place in hell after their death.

CONCUBINES

Apart from his wives and slave-girls, Muhammad also owned a number of concubines. Two among them deserve a brief introduction:

Rihana: Rihana was a Jew from Bani Kuraiza. She was the most beautiful female of her tribe. After Muhammad put most of the male members of her tribe to sword, he chose her before distributing booty among his followers. Some writers maintain that upon her conversion to Islam, Muhammad married her. Others say that she remained a Jew and died a Jew, five years after her enslavement. They add, however, that once when her Master discovered that she had not become pregnant, he asked her to embrace Islam. She is said to have declined his suggestion saying, "O Messenger of

Allah, leave me in thy power; that will be easier for me and for thee."

Maria Qibtia: We have mentioned earlier that Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria, sent Muhammad two Coptic sisters, called Maria (or Mary) and Shiren Qibtia as gift. Of the two, Maria was a great beauty. Both the sisters captivated Muhammad, but since his own law forbade marrying or having sex with two sisters "at one and the same time" (4:23), he reluctantly gave Shiren away to his close friend and poet Hasan Ibn Thabit. She bore Hasan a son, whom they named Abdul Rahman. Later on, Hasan became Muhammad's poet laureate.

Maria also bore Muhammad a son, whom they named Ibrahim after the patriarch Abraham. According to most biographers of Muhammad, Ibrahim died at the age of fifteen months.

The death of Ibrahim caused Muhammad great pain, for he, according to his biographers, had reposed in him his hope for transmitting his name to posterity.

Consequently, he cried uncontrollably as he bent over the bosom of his heart. He was bathed in tears as he laid his child's little body down into the ground. The lamentations reportedly exhibited by Muhammad on the death of Ibrahim were in contradiction of his earlier conduct, vis-a-vis the death of his three sons, born of his first wife Khadija. All of them had died in their infancy. He neither cried nor expressed any sorrow at their death. Similarly, he remained nonchalant at the death of his wife Khadija. We have no historical record that indicates that he cried or expressed his grief at the loss he allegedly suffered due to the passing away of his so-called beloved wife.

We have our doubts on Ibrahim's paternity. We submit, hereunder, the reasons which caused us to develop our doubts:

Traveling to distant places, in 7th century, was not an easy matter. It used to be more so, when one had to undertake his journey from the deserts of the Middle East.

Many people of the Arabian Peninsula did travel to Syria, Persia, Egypt, etc. on trade, but those travels were not frequent. They used to take long time in organizing their caravans, and only after preparing themselves in all respects, did they embark on their missions. Advance preparations were inevitable for the reason that traveling in those days entailed great risk to lives and properties. Due to the perilous nature of their journeys, the Meccans traveled, only once in a year, to Syria and to other distant lands for conducting their trade.

As long-distant travels caused great hardships, women and elderly people always avoided undertaking the risks of long journeys. Those among them who had to go usually traveled on camels' back. Otherwise, the group of travelers almost always consisted of young and strong individuals, who were willing to walk great distances, when their camels provided rides to those men who walked and became exhausted, before them.

In view of the perils and risks they expected to face during their long journeys, the Meccans always sent small caravans to distant countries. The small size of their caravans served them two purposes: It helped them not only save lives; it also prevented their caravans from becoming the target of the highway brigands.

Considering the fact that long journeys, in his time, caused great hardships to the travelers, Muhammad selected Hatib b. Abu Balta to go to the court of Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria and to ask him to accept Islam. Hatib was a young person, who was willing not only to undertake the hazardous journey, but also to complete it successfully. Muhammad must have given him a horse or a mule to cover the distance between Medina and Alexandria.

On his journey back home, this young man has, in his company, two young and beautiful damsels. They were Maria and Shirin Qibtia, two Coptic sisters, given by the Alexandrian Ruler as gifts to be had and enjoyed by Muhammad, the imminent Ruler of the Arabian Peninsula. They travel together, eat together and sleep together in the tent. Hatib, an Arab, most of whom cannot survive without sex, makes his move. Knowing well that they are in the midst of a desert where Hatib's help is as essential as a few drops of water, the girls do not repulse his approach; rather, they indicate their cooperation. Hatib establishes physical relationship with both of them, which continues until their arrival at the gate of Medina.

He delivered them to Muhammad. He was highly impressed by their beauty and would have possessed both of them, had he not decreed earlier to have sex with two biological sisters at the same time to be a sinful act. Thus prevented, he chose Maria, who was prettier than Shirin, to become one of the newest members of his harem, without knowing that she was pregnant.

Muhammad permitted Muslim men to have sex with their female slaves without marrying them (4:24). Muslims are required, under the decree, to accord a bastard child or

person (Dictionary definition: *Bastard*: a person born of unmarried parents) the same care, privileges, respect, honor and opportunities as they accord to their legitimate children. It was this Islamic spirit that enabled many bastards not only to live their normal lives; it also enabled many of them to attain high offices and respect in the past. Wasiq was one bastard who became a Caliph in 842 A.D., after succeeding his father Mustasim. He was the son of a Greek slave girl Karatis (Prof. Masudul Hasan, *History of Islam*, Vol. 1, p. 228).

Muhammad had three sons from Khadija. All of them died in their infancy. We do not know the exact time period in which those boys were born. However, we surmise Khadija had given birth to her sons either during the period Muhammad was undergoing his training in the cave of Hira or during the time he was struggling to establish his apostolic mission among the pagans. In either case, his pre-occupation did not allow him to take good care of his children. Also the obsession that he had developed for his mission prevented him from understanding the important role that a son, in certain circumstances, is called upon to play during his father's life or after his death.

Initially, Muhammad was not much confident of his success, nor did he know that he was going to become the virtual ruler of the Peninsula. Consequently, he did not realize the importance of having a son, whom he could entrust with the responsibility to carry on his mission in his absence. By the time he realized his mistake, it was already too late.

After being in Muhammad's company for some time, Maria disclosed that she was pregnant. He was shocked by the news, for he as well as Maria knew well that he was not

her impregnator. Their respective secrets thus exposed, both of them agreed to play their respective games of deception, hoping that the child, when born, would be a son. In the birth of a son, Muhammad pinned his hope on having a successor; Maria, on the other hand, had a great hope in Muhammad's successor to bring her freedom and a good and happy life. The child's death in his infancy dashed their hopes and they were devastated.

Muhammad's manipulation of Maria's pregnancy created uproar among many of his lukewarm supporters. Having inkling of what was going on in his sex life, they did not believe his claim. Unable to contain their discontentment, he is reported to have put Maria in a separate house, though it was his custom to have all his women reside in the quarters he built in the court of the mosque, now famously known as the "*Mosque of the Prophet*." This mosque is the second holiest mosque, after the temple of Ka'aba, for all Muslims of the world. The child's untimely death, at fifteen months, rescued Muhammad from many of his suspicious followers.

Part - 13

Putting away Maria in a separate house did not solve Muhammad's problem, for she began to blackmail him on the paternity of her child. He tried to subdue her, but failed. Consequently, he brought her to his *harem* where Hafsah found her in Muhammad's company in her own room. That was the event that led him to threaten all of his wives with mass divorce (Sura 66). We shall talk about it shortly.

In vain attempts to defend Muhammad's lascivious deeds, some modern historians of Islam disagree with the accounts of the earlier writers such as Waqidi and Ibn Ishaq et al. They give us the following account:

“Maria and Shiren were the daughters of Simon, one of the most respected Coptic leaders and these two girls were sent to Muhammad by the Archbishop of Alexandria with the request to treat them with all the honor due to them. They were, therefore, not slaves as stated by Waqidi et al” (Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, op. cit. p. 53).

Modern historians, however, do not explain why the Archbishop had sent those girls to Muhammad, and what he was supposed to do with them. Without answering these basic questions, the scholars insist that Muhammad had married Maria and also had Shiren married to his friend, Hasan Ibn Thabit.

DISSENSIONS IN THE HAREM

Within a few years of his arrival in Medina, Muhammad became rich for the second time in his life, the first occasion being after his marriage with Khadija. He now possessed abundant resources, which he acquired through plunder and seizure. He also owned several oasis properties confiscated from the Jews (R. V. C. Bodley, op. cit. p. 229-30). He could now lavish his largesse once again upon whomsoever he pleased. He also set up a Fund to bribe those people who had inclinations towards his faith, but refrained from becoming its adherents (9:60).

Despite the affluence he acquired, the state of his sex health made him greatly sad. Failure to achieve erection made him the object of his wives' scorn. Their meaningful glances at each other made him look like an unwanted man; their demand for sex made him feel like a eunuch; their giggles at his helplessness made his ears burn; their inattention to his presence made him feel like abandoned and their clandestine efforts at procuring lovers made his blood boil (33:53). Their attitude and conduct made him feel helpless once again in his

life; the first one being when his mother left him in Mecca with the strangers, the second one being at Abdul Mutallib and Abu Talib's homes where no woman had come forward to help or console him in his distress.

As if all insults already heaved on him were not enough, all of his wives joined together in demanding hefty increases to their allowance. He could not do it, for this would have made him bankrupt soon. His refusal to oblige caused all of them to rebel against him.

Finding no easy and practical solution to his domestic problems, Muhammad resorted to his usual revelations. Instead of admitting that he was impotent, he asked, through one revelation, all his wives to give up their clamoring for sex, telling them, at the same time, that his mere presence in their midst should be more satisfying than engaging him with them in real sex (33:51). Through another revelation, he chastised them for demanding increase in their allowances, telling them: If you desire the life of this world and its glitter, then come! I will provide for your enjoyment by setting you free all together in a handsome manner (33:28).

Thus making his intentions clear, he took to spending his nights in Aisha's room. In choosing Aisha for his nightly companionship, he had two purposes: First, it would help him avoid all the sex-starved women, and, second, he would use her in the same manner in which he had been engaging her, from the time of her infancy, to gratify his own perverted sexual needs.

To Muhammad's dismay, his move not only failed to solve his problem, it unwittingly made him a victim of Aisha's caprices. Feeling proud and elevated by his regular nightly

companionship, she despised even the slightest variation in his timetable.

Despite herself not having been at all exposed to the pleasures and ecstasy that the penile penetration of vagina gives the females, Aisha is believed to have developed a weird possessiveness towards her man. One day he was late in coming to Aisha's room. Seizing the opportunity to take him to task, she wanted to know where he had been before coming to her room. Muhammad replied, "I have been with Umm Salamah." "Hast thou not had thy fill of Umm Salamah?" she asked, and he smiled without answering. She added, "O Messenger of God, tell me thyself. If thou wert between the two slopes of a valley, one of which had not been grazed whereas the other had been grazed, on which wouldst thou pasture thy flocks?" "On that which had not been grazed," said Muhammad. "Even so," Aisha said, "and I am not as any other of thy wives. Every woman of them had a husband before thee, except me."

Aisha's continuous nagging and the persistent haranguing of his other wives had its toll on his mental health; it turned him into a sadist. He practiced sadism on all of his wives by depriving them not only the pleasures of sexual intercourse; he also denied them the happiness of motherhood. His ego still remaining unhealed, he chided women for wearing trinkets in their childhood; he derided their allegedly foolish nature (16:92); he declared them incapable of winning debates against men; he equated one man's intelligence with that of two women (2:282); he decreed man's hegemony over woman; he put the right of marriage and divorce in the man's hands (2:236, 229-230); he permitted Muslim men to beat their wives (4:34) even on slightest pretext and last, but not the

least, he turned the existence of women to an inanimate thing, with which he encouraged his followers to have sex "in any manner, when and how they willed." (2:222-223).

Contrary to what we have mentioned about the dysfunctional aspect of his sex life, some Muslim writers tell us that Muhammad satisfied all his wives, concubines and the slave-girls in a single night, for '*he had the virility of twenty men*'. (Martin Lings, op. cit. p. 271) The learned writers, however, do not tell us why any of his fully satisfied women, who joined his harem in Medina, never conceived, even after living with him for as long as ten years.

It had been an Arab custom, from time immemorial, to procure slaves, either by abduction or by purchase. Their male Masters engaged both the male and female slaves in sexual acts whenever they fancied. Females Mistresses, too, engaged the male slaves to satisfy their sexual needs (Philip K. Hitti, op. cit. p. 235). Relying on the pagan Arabs' promiscuous behavior, Muhammad allowed his own followers to satisfy their sexual inclinations in the same manner.

Muhammad's Paradise

To make his doctrine on sex more attractive to his followers, Muhammad assured them of having in Paradise a multiple of doe-eyed virgin houris with whom they would have sex *ad infinitum*. For those men who would not be interested in females, he made a different provision. They would be attended in Paradise, he told them, by young boys, graced with eternal youth, who to the beholders' eyes, will seem like sprinkled pearls. When they would gaze upon the scene (a reference, perhaps, to human anatomy), said he, they would behold a kingdom blissful and glorious (human

anatomy, again?). The boys shall be arrayed in garments of fine green silk and rich brocade, and adorned with bracelets of silver. Muhammad himself would give them pure and holy wine, mixed with camphor, to drink (76:19-21). In their state of drunkenness, those boys would be providing complete sexual pleasures to their pious masters, a tantalizing concept that induced many homosexual pagan men to accept Islam without having any regard to the consequences they were likely to face, before their death, in this world.

From the Quran, we have learned much about the Paradise and the amenities it holds for its residents. Its width alone is that of the whole of the heavens and the earth (3:133). It has everything to provide a blissful life to all of its occupants. It has more fruits than all the fruits our whole earth has; it has neither rain nor heat of the sun. It does not experience storms nor does it have the snow of the winter (76:13). By virtue of the controlled climate that the Paradise has, neither its present occupants need now nor its future inhabitants would need any homes to live within. All of its present occupants, prophets Idris and Isa (Jesus Christ to the Christians), being two among many others, have all along been living in the Paradise's open sky. For comfort, they wear silk robes (76:12). They spend their time reclining on soft couches, shadowed by tree branches, from which always hang clusters of fruit (76:14).

Paradise's inhabitants partake their meals from silver dishes; they have large silver goblets for drinking not only the purest water but also the delectable wine (47:15); its measure being dependent on the drinker's wish (76:16). No matter the quantity of wine one consumes, he never gets drunk. Instead, he feels a soothing sensation that makes him yearn for sex. If

the blessed soul wishes for a female, a doe-eyed virgin houri presents herself for copulation. On the other hand, if another soul wishes for anal sex, he will find a boy, graced with eternal youth and appearing like sprinkled pearls, ready to satisfy carnal lust.

Depending on the length of their respective erections, the Paradise's inhabitants may remain locked with their partners for an indefinite period of time.

And this goes on in an open space, where God appears every now and then to witness his beloved Muslim men's performance. Aroused by unending erotic scenes, celibate Isa must also be enjoying uninterrupted sex either with the houris or with the boys to compensate for what he had missed during his short stay on earth.

Copulations over, both the houri and the boy turn virgins once again, ready to serve those men who may wish to have them without a moment's notice.

Since pious Muslim men -and their number is huge- avoid excessive and entertaining sex in their ephemeral lives, the sight of most of their brethren engaging themselves, before their eyes, in sex in a large group will not appear to them like an orgy. Instead, it would appear to them as being another pious act in Paradise, its methodology, composition of partners and duration having been determined by God himself.

Muhammad's concept on homosexual bliss his followers are supposed to have in their next life prompted Abdel Hamid Kisk, a blind preacher of Egypt, to tell his audience that *"Muslims who entered paradise would enjoy eternal erections and the company of young boys draped in earrings and necklaces."* Some of the Ulemas, the religious scholars at al-Azhar

University, the Egyptian government's seat of Islamic learning, disagreed. "Yes," they said, "*men in paradise would have erections, but merely protracted, not perpetual*" (Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 26).

Those scholars, however, did not dispute the possibility of pederasty in Paradise.

Convinced fully that God could not have said or prescribed all the licentious acts for Muslims to enjoy in Paradise, we are of the opinion that all those statements came from Muhammad himself. He used God as a shield all the times to make his nonsensical and perverted statements efficacious. Where he felt necessary, he intertwined God's existence with that of his own. Those statements which have God and Muhammad jointly proclaiming certain orders or decrees (33:36 et al) should suffice to prove our claim. In the backdrop of our stated position, we have, in some places, substituted the Quranic words "Lord" or "God" by the word "Muhammad" in order to restore relevancy to the matters or issues under our discussion.

-- Muhammad's mere interaction with other females evoked his wives' wrath, even after he had become sexually dysfunctional. The following incidence illustrates the intensity of their distrust in their husband.

One day, Muhammad was in Hafsah's room with Maria Qibtia, the slave-girl given to him as a present by the ruler of Alexandria. Returning unexpectedly, she found them together (see Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *'The Glorious Koran'*, p. 405, R.V.C. Bodley, op. cit. p. 266 & N. J. Dawood, op. cit. p. 398). Dismayed, she asked him what he was doing in her room with a slave-girl. He replied: "*Be quite! I swear in the name of God that I shall never see her again. But whatever you*

know about me and her, you must not tell anyone else." (Dr. Humayun Azad, 'Nari' (Woman), p. 77. He has a slightly different account on their togetherness).

Her anger inflamed, perhaps, by the disclosure of Maria's pregnancy as well as by his casual dismissal of the affair, Hafsah narrated her conversation with Muhammad to Aisha. Both of them confronted him, demanding an explanation of his conduct as well as of what he had told Hafsah about his having a child from the slave girl. Unashamedly, he tried, in vain, to calm the infuriated and shrieking women with repeated promises not to be with her again. The women would not believe him and kept on clamoring like a band of maniacs. Finally, Muhammad cracked up.

"Hell is inhabited by women!" he cried and added: *"You women are more contemptuous of God than me. I shall not visit you for a month!"* and then he stormed out of Hafsah's cabin.

Muhammad had promised not to be with Maria again to please his wives, but soon he realized that by not having a relationship with her, he was going to lose his claim on her child. To grant obviation to himself from his promise to Hafsah, he declared:

"Prophet, why do you prohibit that [Maria] which God has made lawful to you in seeking to please your wives? God is forgiving and merciful. God has given you absolution from such oaths. God is your Master. He is the Omniscient One, the Wise one".

When the Prophet confided a secret [i.e. Maria's child] to one of his wives [Hafsah], and she disclosed it [to Aisha] and God informed him [Muhammad] of this, he made known one part of it and said nothing about the other. And when he acquainted her [Hafsah] with it, she said: "Who told you this?" He [Muhammad] replied: "The Wise One, the All Knowing, told me."

If you two [Hafsah and Aisha] turn to God in repentance (for your hearts have sinned?), you shall be pardoned; but if you conspire against him [Muhammad], know that God is his protector, and Gabriel, and the righteous among the faithful. The angels too are his helpers.

It may well be that, if he divorce you, his Lord will give him in your place better wives than yourselves, submissive to God and full of faith, devout, penitent, and given to fasting; both formerly wedded and virgins." (66:1-5)

We note that the references to what God had supposedly told Muhammad about his domestic problem, what he hid from one of his wives and her response to God's disclosure are obscure (N. J. Dawood, op. cit. p. 398).

The language of the declaration makes it clear that the incident of Maria had not remained confined to Muhammad and to his two wives only. Rather, it seems to have spread to his entire harem, making it impossible for him to contain their revolt. It also makes it known to us that Muhammad's wives were in the habit of disobeying him. Furthermore, they were not used to observing the basic rituals of Islam, such as praying and giving alms. He admonished them in the past for their shortcomings, but it seems they did not pay him heed, and continued to live and do things in manners that suited their fancies and characters.

Before the showdown that took place between Muhammad and his wives on the questions of Maria and her child, he had tried various means to bring them under his control. He cajoled them; he implored them to act like a prophet's wives (33:32); he demanded of them to stay home quietly and not to make a dazzling display of themselves (33:33) in order to avoid drawing to themselves the attention of lurking lovers;

he instructed them to establish regular prayers, to practice charity, to obey him and to recite what he taught them about his Signs and his Wisdom (33:34). When all the above failed, he even threatened them with a double punishment that would await them in their next life, should they continue to disobey him with their guilty conducts (33:30).

Nothing seems to have changed his wives' conducts. He used the threat of divorce as the last resort, knowing that it would be effective at least in two ways:

Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, while Hafsa was Omar's daughter. Both those men aspired to achieve power, wealth and fame after their son-in-law's death. Consequently, they always supported him even on those matters which others considered false and untenable. Muhammad knew their state of mind. He also knew that in his dispute with his wives, they would not support their daughters. Instead, they would support him in order to maintain the congeniality of their relationship. He was right, and his fathers-in-law came to his aid.

Upon hearing Muhammad's threat of divorce, both Abu Bakr and Umar approached their daughters. They chastised them for disobeying their husband. They also made it clear to them that should their husband really carry out his threat, they would not have any support from them, nor would they get shelter in their homes after being divorced.

Muhammad's trick worked this time. Both his wives weighed in the consequences of a divorce. With their own eyes, they saw the despicable lives that the divorcees lived. They also visualized the difficulties that they would have to endure after being divorced by their highly vindictive husband.

Bereft of parental support and the consequential prospects of a difficult and uncertain life after divorce, Muhammad's helpless wives had no option but to cave in to his demands. Following their surrender to their husband, they lived in the manner he wanted them to live; they breathed the air he wanted them to breathe and they lived on what he gave them to support their lives (33:51). They also lived their lives, until his death in 632 A.D., without enjoying the pleasures of sex and motherhood. Much before he was able to saddle his rebellious wives, he made various laws that favored only his whims and lust. In doing so, he paid no consideration to those who were likely to be his victims. Through one such law or decree, he ordained for himself:

"Prophet, We have made lawful to you the wives whom you have granted dowries and the slave girls whom God has given you as booty; the daughters of your paternal and maternal uncles and of your paternal and maternal aunts who fled with you; and any believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to take in marriage. This privilege is yours alone, being granted to no other believer. We well know the duties We have imposed on the faithful concerning their wives and slave girls. We grant you this privilege so that there should be no difficulty for you. God is forgiving and merciful" (33:50)

The pagans, we believe, married their cousins, but they abhorred the idea of having sex with them without binding themselves together in marital knots. Muhammad flaunted this requirement of decency and had sex with his cousins without marrying them. Frowned upon and criticized by the pagans for his illegitimate and unethical behavior, he retaliated by decreeing what appears to be a license for him to

undertake open acts of fornication. Nature eventually reacted to his excesses; it turned his tool of excessive vigor and prowess into a useless lump of flesh.

CHILDREN

Opinions vary on the number of Muhammad's legitimate children. The commonly held belief is that he had seven children with Khadija, his first wife. They were Qasim, Taiyyab, Taher, Zainab, Rokeya, Umm Kulthum and Fatima. All his daughters lived long, but none of his sons survived beyond their infancy. Why they died so young, or what had caused them death, remains shrouded in secrecy. Historians should focus some of their attention on this intriguing matter so that the students of Islamic History could put to rest their suspicion, which surrounds the death, in infancy, of all of Muhammad's male descendents.

We believe that had one of his legitimate sons survived him, he would not only have inherited most of Muhammad's wealth, his followers would also have turned him into a highly venerated spiritual leader. Were those factors responsible for their death are something that we cannot pass our judgment on; however, we hope that the future investigative historians would dig out the truth and lay it bare for everyone to draw their own conclusions.

Muhammad's eldest daughter, Zainab, was married to Abu Aas. Rokeya and Umm Kulthum, his second and third daughters, were married respectively to Utba and Utaibah, two sons of his uncle, Abu Lahab. When Muhammad began preaching Islam, Abu Lahab and his wife, Umm Jamil, became his inveterate enemies. In order to punish him, they forced their sons to repudiate their wives, causing the

aggrieved Muhammad to express his anger in a malediction against Abu Lahab and his wife in the words recorded in the Quran (Sura 111, titled Abu Lahab, the Father of Flame).

After their divorce, Muhammad gave Rokeya in marriage to Othman Ibn Affan, his companion and confidante. She died in Madina after her return from Abyssinia following the battle of Badr. Othman subsequently married Umm Kulthum, his sister-in-law.

Following the battle of Badr, Abu Bakr and Omar, Muhammad's elderly fathers-in-law, sought Fatima, his youngest daughter, who was about twenty years of age, in marriage. He refused their solicitations, and arranged her marriage to his cousin Ali who was one of the first persons to embrace Islam after Muhammad had begun its preaching. In spite of Ali being a poor man, Muhammad decided to marry off his daughter with a lavishness that was hitherto unknown to the people of Madina. With this ambition in mind, he slaughtered a ram; supplementing it with grain donated by the local people, he prepared a feast for the entire population of the city. People who attended the occasion confessed later that they had never before seen its equal anywhere in their entire land.

The responsibility for preparing the nuptial bed in the house of the bridegroom fell to the stepmother Aisha, who then was barely eleven years old. She had some soft sand collected from the river, and scattering it on the earthen floor, she covered it with sheepskin. Placing on top of it a pillow of leather stuffed with palm-fibre, she completed the grand nuptial bed to the admiration of all who happened to see such a rare display for the first time in their life.

MUHAMMAD'S DEATH

After Muhammad returned to Madina upon completing his last pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 A.D., he issued orders for assembling of an army to go on an expedition to Syria. When a powerful army had been collected, he appointed Osama, a twenty-year-old son of Zaid, as its commander. Muhammad bade it farewell on a mission that was destined by circumstances to remain unaccomplished during his lifetime.

On the eve of the day on which he had dispatched Osama to Syria, Muhammad suffered a violent headache. He attributed the pain to the lingering effects of the poison given to him by a Jew of Khaybar. The agony was accompanied by vertigo, as well as delirium, which seemed to have been a part of all of his paroxysms.

When he felt slightly better, he retired to Aisha's apartment to tell her about his illness. It so happened that Aisha herself was suffering from a headache that day. On entering her room, he heard her moaning, "Oh, my head!"

"Nay, Aisha," said Muhammad, "it is my head!" Having said so, he looked at her searchingly, seeking some sign of mortal sickness in her face; finding none, he said to the girl, "*I wished that you died whilst yet I was alive, that I might ask forgiveness for thee and bury thee*" (Martin Lings, op. cit. p. 338) Aisha retorted, "*Yes, I know what you wish. You wish that I should die so that you could bring in a new wife in my place*" (Gulam Mustafa, op. cit. p. 259) Amused by Aisha's teasing, Muhammad settled down in her room.

Muhammad's headache intensified, and on the second day he developed fever and a serious pain in his stomach. After finding some relief, he was aided in going to the mosque, which was adjacent to his residence. Here he seated himself

on the pulpit; he addressed the congregation on certain issues. In his final remarks, he asked, "*Is there anyone from whom I have taken something and not paid it back? Let him come forward and be identified.*" At this, a man from the throng reminded him of an unpaid debt of three dinars of silver he owed him. Muhammad instantly paid back the loan, with interest (Washington Irving, op. cit. pp.190-191).

If the story of payment of interest on his debt, as told, were to be accepted as being true, in that event, we must point out that Muhammad had done so in violation of his own doctrine (2:275), which forbade usury. Within its purview also falls the debtor who pays interest on a loan. Of course, Muhammad was a special person and he did not have to live by his own rules or doctrines. **Dictators never make rules for themselves; they make them for their subjects only.**

After a few days of intolerable suffering from great pain and dementia, Muhammad breathed his last on Monday, **June 8, 632 A.D** (Philip K. Hitti, op. cit. p. 119).

According to one Muslim account, Muhammad was inflicted by the black magic of a Jew and his daughter. Under its impact, he remained almost insane until about the time of his death. His sufferings intensified with the onset of severe headache. Under intolerable conditions, he ran from place to place, in search of relief, but he found none.

Eventually, he found relief in his own revelations. It consisted of eleven verses, invocations or statements. Through them, he sought refuge in the Lord alone (not Lord and him) from the mischief of his creation; from the mischief of the night's darkness; from the mischief of the conjuring witches; from the mischief of the envier; from the mischief of slinking prompter who whispers in the hearts of men as well as from

jinn (Suras 113 & 114). Eleven invocations removed eleven spells of black magic. Removal of the evil's effect from his body made him recover from his illness for a brief period of time. He fell sick again and died.

Whatever was the cause of his death, his departure ended a long period of tyranny. His death freed his wives from his bondage; it gave a sigh of relief to the pagans whom he forced to abandon their ancestral faith and it also removed the shadow of his omnipresent sword from the heads of the Jews.

On the flipside, he left behind a set of religious doctrines which have been impacting the lives of a vast number of his followers even after his death some 1400 years ago. While some of his teachings have proven instrumental in crippling the lives of many of his own followers, others have been helping them to create schism and hatred in those humans who follow different philosophies of life. *Allah-o-Akbar*, essentially a Muslim war-cry, still turns many Muslims engaged in battles, interfaith riots and sectarian conflicts into ferocious animals; alleged support given in the past by angels to the warring Muslims against the infidels drives small and weaker Islamic States to challenge the combined might of the world's all industrialized nations; murder of the Jews by Muhammad and his hateful teaching against them (5:54) still generate fiery desire in most of the Muslims of the elimination of all Jews from the face of planet earth, and his call to kill the pagans whenever and wherever they are found (59:5) is a constant source of inspiration for many of his followers to engage themselves in the murder of all the Hindus of the world. His belligerent teachings, as Bernard Lewis has pointed out in his book "*The Crisis of Islam*", are considered by many Muslims to be a duty for them to "destroy the entire world before their apocalyptic design of restoring the Islamic caliphate can be realized."